



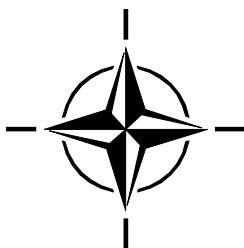
RTO TECHNICAL MEMORANDUM

TM-HFM-159

Child Soldiers as the Opposing Force

(Des enfants soldats comme
adversaires)

Final Report of the HFM-159/RTO Task Group.



Published January 2011





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- SET Sensors and Electronics Technology Panel

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Child Soldiers as the Opposing Force

(RTO-TM-HFM-159)

Executive Summary

The war on terrorism is an example of asymmetrical warfare: an armed conflict in which the conventional armed forces of one party, which uses regular means, is opposed by an unconventional enemy using irregular means. A very sad example of the unconventional enemy is the child warrior, sometimes exploited as a suicide terrorist, other times recruited and trained in a very cruel tradition of local warlords. Based upon frontline observations and two case studies of mental health problems stemming from confrontations with child warriors, the root cause of the moral dilemma in this confrontation is analysed. By transactional analysis of a parental role, an adult role and a childhood role in the theatre of war it appears that war has its attraction, next to its very dark and disgusting sides. From the intrinsic conflict between the childhood role and the adult role in war it appears that the demarcation between the two roles is not only determined by age, but also by maturity, which increases fast by the increase of wartime experiences.

The primacy of politics implies that politicians decide when and where they send their armed forces. It also implies, especially in democratic societies, that these armed forces are expected to behave in accordance with basic human values. Thus professionalism in a military context includes moral professionalism. The necessity of this inclusion is illustrated in the confrontation with child soldiers as the opposing force.

The confrontation with child soldiers often poses a tragic moral dilemma. Dealing with these dilemmas in a morally responsible way is part of the moral professionalism and moral competence military personnel should be trained for. As will be indicated, this also implies learning how to develop the adequate resilience to carry the burden of the difficult moral choices that have to be made.

From observations of soldiers of the industrial democracies who face these young combatants it is concluded that children are not seen as hated enemies and soldiers usually exhibit a great amount of empathy toward children in war-torn societies. Consequently, engagements with child soldiers can be incredibly demoralizing for professional troops and can also affect unit cohesion. For example, British forces operating in West Africa in 2001 faced deep problems of clinical depression and post-traumatic stress disorder among individual soldiers who had faced child soldiers. The literature search by the British Ministry of Defence in 2006 on the consequences of facing child soldiers has uncovered very little data relating specifically to the psychological impact of child soldiers on armed forces personnel. This in itself is an important finding, showing a lack of knowledge in this field and thus highlighting the level of research that MoD will have to carry out to support its own forces. The report has therefore focused on defining child soldiers, and describing the context in which they operate and the problems they pose. The data has been presented thematically, drawing out key findings and learning points for armed forces personnel. The findings highlight that the issues that need to be addressed encompass many different areas of responsibility, including legal guidelines, cultural awareness (both of our own and of the host nation's culture) as well as military doctrine and tactics. Public perception and media reporting also seem to impact upon how a soldier deals with any child soldier engagement, enforcing our own cultural framework (western values and morals for example) onto a situation in which it may not be applicable.

Based upon the preceding information the Task Group identified four sets of recommendations, namely, Legal Backing, Review of Military Doctrine, Training (including ethical training and education) and Support, and Media Perceptions.

Des enfants soldats comme adversaires

(RTO-TM-HFM-159)

Synthèse

La guerre contre le terrorisme est un exemple de guerre asymétrique : un conflit armé au cours duquel les forces armées conventionnelles de l'un des opposants, utilisant des moyens réguliers, sont confrontées à un ennemi non conventionnel utilisant des moyens irréguliers. Les enfants soldats sont un bien triste exemple d'ennemi non conventionnel : tantôt exploités comme terroristes-suicide, tantôt recrutés et formés dans la cruelle tradition des seigneurs de la guerre locaux. En se fondant sur des observations recueillies au front et sur deux études de cas relatives aux problèmes mentaux résultant de la confrontation avec des enfants soldats, la cause racine du dilemme moral de cette confrontation est analysée. Grâce à une analyse transactionnelle du rôle parental, du rôle de l'adulte et du rôle de l'enfant sur le théâtre d'opération, il apparaît que la guerre possède une certaine attraction, en plus de ses côtés sombres et révoltants. Du conflit intrinsèque entre le rôle de l'enfant et le rôle de l'adulte dans la guerre, il ressort que la démarcation entre les deux rôles n'est pas seulement déterminée par l'âge, mais également par la maturité, qui augmente rapidement avec le nombre d'expériences de la guerre.

La primauté de la politique implique que ce sont les politiciens qui décident quand et où envoyer leurs forces armées. Elle implique également, en particulier dans les sociétés démocratiques, que lesdites forces armées sont censées respecter les valeurs humaines de base. Le professionnalisme, dans un contexte militaire, inclut donc un professionnalisme moral. La nécessité de cette inclusion est illustrée par la confrontation avec des enfants soldats comme adversaires.

La confrontation avec des enfants soldats pose souvent un tragique dilemme moral. Résoudre ce dilemme d'une manière moralement responsable fait partie du professionnalisme moral et de la compétence morale auxquels le personnel militaire devrait être formé. Comme nous le verrons, cela implique également la nécessité d'apprendre à développer la résistance adéquate afin de supporter le poids des difficiles choix moraux qui doivent être faits.

D'après les observations de soldats des démocraties industrielles qui font face à ces jeunes combattants, il ressort que les enfants ne sont pas perçus comme des ennemis haïssables, et que les soldats font généralement montre de beaucoup d'empathie envers les enfants dans les sociétés déchirées par la guerre. En conséquence, les engagements contre des enfants soldats peuvent être incroyablement démoralisants pour les troupes professionnelles et peuvent également affecter la cohésion de l'unité. Par exemple, les forces britanniques opérant en Afrique de l'Ouest en 2001 ont été confrontées à de sérieux problèmes de dépression clinique et de stress post-traumatique parmi les combattants ayant fait face à des enfants soldats. Les recherches menées par le Ministère de la Défense britannique en 2006 en vue de se documenter sur les conséquences de la confrontation avec des enfants soldats ont révélé très peu de données spécifiquement relatives à l'impact psychologique des enfants soldats sur le personnel des forces armées. Cela est déjà en soi une découverte importante, démontrant le peu de connaissances en ce domaine et soulignant l'ampleur des recherches que le Ministère de la Défense devra effectuer pour soutenir ses propres forces. Le rapport s'est, par conséquent, attaché à définir les enfants soldats et à décrire le contexte dans lequel ils opèrent et les problèmes qu'ils posent. Les données ont été présentées thématiquement, faisant ressortir les principales conclusions et les points d'apprentissage pour le personnel des forces armées. Les conclusions soulignent que les questions à aborder englobent de nombreux domaines de responsabilité, notamment les directives légales, la sensibilité culturelle (à la fois la nôtre et celle de la nation hôte), la doctrine et les tactiques militaires. L'opinion publique et la couverture médiatique semblent également avoir un impact sur le comportement d'un combattant lors d'un

engagement avec un enfant soldat, par l'application de notre propre cadre culturel (la morale et les valeurs occidentales, par exemple) dans une situation où il n'est peut-être pas applicable.

En se fondant sur les informations ci-dessus, le Groupe de travail a identifié quatre séries de recommandations : Support juridique, Réexamen de la doctrine militaire, Formation (y compris l'enseignement et la formation éthiques) et soutien, et Perception des médias.



Chapter 1 – INTRODUCTION

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

According to UNICEF there are approximately 300.000 child soldiers involved in more than 30 conflicts worldwide. These children are younger than 18 and in some cases not older than 8. UNICEF defines the child soldier as a person under the age of 18 who is “engaged in deadly combat or combat support as part of an armed force or group.” These children can be combatants, spies, messengers and cooks. Some of them, especially – though not solely – the girls are raped and forced to provide sexual services. The boys and girls are often abducted or forced in other ways to join warlords. For instance because the warlord in question, or his colleagues, threaten to kill the family of the child, or actually do kill them. However, some children also participate voluntarily in war and conflict, often because this is the only way to survive. This is comprehensible because the situation these children live in can best be compared to the pre-state situation described by the English philosopher Hobbes. This situation of the ‘war of everyman against every man’, in which only the right of the strongest counts, due to the fact that there is no rule of law and no government to provide it, creates a window of opportunity for those hungry for power. In this Hobbesian situation children act as soldiers, sometimes in a ruthless way. They are both victim and perpetrator and often pose a problem with far reaching consequences for professional military personnel.

The Task Group of the Human Factors and Medicine panel on ‘Child Soldiers as the Opposing Force’ (HFM-159/RTG) called two meetings in which the subjects crucial to the theme of ‘child soldiers as the opposing force’ were discussed. The first meeting was held in 2006; the second meeting in November 2007. This report is the result of these meetings.

2.0 STRUCTURE OF THE REPORT

Following this introduction in Chapter 1, Chapter 2 analyses the COMEDS assignment and translates it to the HFM ET and RTG. The theme of child soldiers is explored from the viewpoint of transactional analysis. It appears that from this viewpoint the confrontation with child soldiers provokes the conflicting roles of caring parent and competing adult. In this context the devastating effects on the mental health of military personnel are also discussed.

Chapter 3 underlines the necessity of moral professionalism in confrontation with child soldiers. The confrontation with child soldiers often poses a tragic moral dilemma. Dealing with these dilemmas in a morally responsible way is part of the moral professionalism and moral competence military personnel should be trained for. Ethics education and dilemma training are thus of utmost importance. As is indicated in this chapter, this also implies learning how to develop the adequate resilience to carry the burden of the difficult moral choices that have to be made.

Chapter 4 focuses on the image of the child soldier and the moral panic it causes. The chapter states that in order to understand the place of child soldiers as the opposing force we need to take into account three factors: the ‘folk’ or ‘lay’ model of soldiering that soldiers of the industrial democracies use to make sense of their actions; what have become global assumptions and images of children; and the activities of a host of organizations and movements that cultivate the imagery of child soldiers. These images of child soldiers are propagated by a loose coalition of media representatives, policy and decision-makers, (mainly psychological) researchers, security experts, human rights advocates and humanitarian activists. These images resonate with the soldiers “on the ground” who have to face child soldiers.

INTRODUCTION

Chapter 5 presents the technical report for the literature review task on the topic of ‘Psychological well-being of professional armed forces personnel facing child soldiers’. This task has been carried out under the Preparing People for Operations contract let to the Haldane Spearman Consortium, led by QinetiQ (GBR).

Chapter 6, the concluding chapter, presents the recommendations for military practice that can be distilled from the preceding chapters. The implementation of these recommendations is important, for, as indicated above, child soldiers often pose a problem with far reaching consequences for professional military personnel. Moreover, they pose a problem with far-reaching consequences for all the other stakeholders that are involved in this dilemma that the confrontation with the child soldier represents. However, this is but one of the many tragic moral dilemmas that military personnel is confronted with in present-day operations. This makes resilience an important part of moral competence and moral professionalism, as is stated in this report. That is one of the reasons the Task Group decided to broaden the scope of the HFM-159/RTG to ‘The Confrontation with Tragic Moral Dilemma’s and Mental Health Problems’.

Chapter 2 – TRANSACTIONAL ANALYSIS OF CHILD WARRIORS AS THE OPPOSING FORCE

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ABSTRACT

The war on terrorism in the Middle East and Far East Countries is an example of asymmetrical warfare: an armed conflict in which the conventional armed forces of one party, which uses regular means, is opposed by an unconventional enemy using irregular means. A very sad example of the unconventional enemy is the child warrior, sometimes exploited as a suicide terrorist, other times recruited and trained in a very cruel tradition of local warlords. The latter example seems to occur more often in Africa. Within the NATO Research and Technology Organisation, the Human Factors and Medicine Panel developed a research initiative in 2006 to study the feasibility of NATO research and policy on child warriors as the opposing force. Based upon frontline observations and two case studies of mental health problems stemming from confrontations with child warriors, the root cause of the moral dilemma in this confrontation is analysed. By transactional analysis of a parental role, an adult role and a childhood role in the theatre of war it appears that war has its attraction, next to its very dark and disgusting sides. From the intrinsic conflict between the childhood role and the adult role in war it appears that the demarcation between the two roles is not only determined by age, but also by maturity, which increases fast by the increase of wartime experiences. A growing number of countries are preventing compulsorily recruitment and deployment of children under the age of 18 in armed conflicts. However, the fast development of asymmetrical warfare in various theatres implies the need to prepare for engaging child warriors as the opposing force. Recommendations are being developed for engaging child warriors and recovery of armed forces personnel who were mentally injured in the confrontation with child warriors.

2.1 INTRODUCTION AND RESEARCH QUESTION

One of the quite recent developments in asymmetric warfare is that civilians and especially children take more part in attacking military forces than ever before. When modern military operations are taking place more and more frequently in urban theatres, the likelihood increases of facing children as the opposing force, especially in crowd and riot control. Future military operations in Africa are even more likely to be confronted with children as the opposing force, as local warlords recruit children at a very young age, often using extreme cruelty. The changing of sociological structures, like failing states or the breakdown of extended families and villages, contributes to the raising number of child warriors. This raising number increases the likelihood of a confrontation with child warriors. Based upon commanders' observations of ongoing peacekeeping operations in Africa, military personnel are encountering child warriors more often and more intense, which can result in military service personnel already getting used to it. Also in theatres where civil populations oppose military forces, the issue of child warriors is surfacing. This is not a new phenomenon, but the numbers are increasing and are likely to cause habituation on the psychological level and institutionalization on a sociological level. Some times, suicide bombers are juveniles. In contrast with many other publications on child warriors, which focus on child warriors themselves [1], this chapter focuses on regular military forces, which engage child warriors as their opponents. This shift in focus explains why an initial literature review did not yield many relevant publications, although child warriors are not new phenomena. For example, child warriors already fought in the US Civil War, the Second World War on all sides and in Vietnam, but also for decades in the Middle East and Africa. Their increasing presence in asymmetrical warfare urges to study their impact on regular forces, as the confrontation between child warriors and regular forces is more and more frequently occurring.

The moral acceptance by the parent societies of the armed forces of this new feature of asymmetric warfare is not yet fully studied or understood. The parent societies of most Western armed forces condemn the use of child warriors in all kinds of international and national rules and regulations. However, their military personnel have to cope with the actual threat, posed by these child warriors and the psychological issues in fighting these child warriors. After their deployment, the parent societies can ignore or reject their confrontation with child warriors, which brings them in a lonely position, struggling with their deployment experiences in full isolation. In restoring peace in the post war era, the disarmament and treatment of child warriors deserves attention also. In providing good practices of military mental health care in all the stages of the deployment cycle, including the preparation stage, the stage of deployment and the stage of redeployment the issue of the confrontation with child warriors needs to be dealt with. The research question which has to be answered in this respect reads: *which actions across the deployment cycle are required to maintain the mental health of military personnel who engage child warriors as the opposing force?* The confrontation with child warriors is likely to relate to shame and guilt and subsequent mental health problems. This requires that the actions to maintain military mental health have to focus on the causes and consequences of this shame and guilt in military personnel, who engaged child warriors as their opponents.

2.1.1 Overview

Firstly, this article describes some of the differences between warriors and soldiers and subsequently between child warriors and child soldiers. The needs of regular forces which for example are deployed in United Nations' operations or operations of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation are confronted with child warriors are also described. Secondly, some frontline observations of recent operations and two case-studies show how effectively child warriors can engage and sometimes kill regular force-members. Thirdly, this article also contains the exploration of child warriors from the viewpoint of transactional analysis, which describes interactions between human beings from their ego states as a child, an adult or a parent. It appears that from a transactional point of view the confrontation with child warriors provokes the conflicting roles of caring parent and competing adult. This conflict indicates a kind of moral dilemma in the confrontation with child warriors, when it is described in the model of a transactional analysis. Fourthly, the devastating effects on mental health of shame and guilt which may arise from the confrontation with child warriors are described, including possible countermeasures in preparations for deployments and psychological support during and after deployments. This also leads to some guidance on the NATO way ahead in the sad subject of child warriors as the opposing force.

2.2 CHILD WARRIORS OR CHILD SOLDIERS?

A distinct difference between soldiers and warriors stems from their level of organization. Soldiers, or military personnel more in general, are the professional members of their armed forces, who are most of the time well selected, disciplined and trained. Their armed forces are highly organized and well equipped with advanced inhabited and uninhabited weapon system. Operations of the armed forces are controlled by their democratically chosen governments and are integrated in a foreign affairs policy, which serves the national and international needs for safety and justice. The United Nations (UN) and the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) are international organisations, in which these needs are addressed at an international level. Warriors are less organized and disciplined, so their actions are less controlled and predictable. Their weaponry appears to be limited to guns, rifles and improvised explosive devices, but is easy accessible, easily to be operated and hidden most of the time. The effective formula of surprise as an effective way to military success can be used by warriors more easily than by soldiers. Subsequently, they might be even harder to engage effectively than soldiers. These features also apply for making a distinction between child soldiers and child warriors.

However, it can be assumed that the distinction between soldiers and warriors is more a continuum than a dichotomy. A mixture between both ends of this continuum is called a 'So-bel', a Soldier-Rebel [2], who are dominating the 'new wars'. Rebels and warriors who take part in operations intensely and

frequently might get trained in a way that regular forces cannot train, even when ‘ they train as they fight’. In doing so, warriors are more trained and hardened than soldiers. Once warriors are being sponsored their level of training, discipline and armament easily reaches the levels of soldiers in regular forces, especially by the total lack of morality and overwhelming obedience, often for the simple but very powerful need for survival or outrageous hate, which fosters revenge. In this respect, the ‘Virginia Tech’ shooter, who killed 32 university students in April 2007 in the United States appears to have been driven by these motives, killing also himself, which makes his case a very nearby and shocking example of a ‘ child’ warrior. A US Police investigator reported on him: *‘Most startling to me ... is a young man who’s 23 years old that’s been here for a while that seemed to not know anybody,’ he says. More than most people, the senior from northern Virginia lived in his computer* [3]. The bare fact that this shooter was older than eighteen did not make him an adult. Cultural differences between nations also influence the pace of the development of children into adults and adults into parents. It is obvious that wealthy West European and North American countries have the luxury to postpone the development of their childhood into adulthood. In less wealthy countries children take up adult roles far earlier. If this shooter has only lived with his parents and has failed to develop bonds with peers, living in total isolation in his TV/video/computer world, the plea can be made that he was still a child, even being far older than 18 years of age. On the other hand can children at the age of twelve already earn a living or contribute to essentials for survival of the family, for instance in providing a daily ration of water, to be taken from a well on a many miles distance walk. At the age of fifteen they are literally speaking parents or at least fulfill parental roles in a total lack of time for play and development. These differences bring into consideration that the definition of a child or the demarcation between a child and an adult, depends not only on age but also on psychosocial developmental stage and socio-cultural circumstances.

2.2.1 The Relevance of Studying the Confrontation with Child Soldiers for NATO Operations

In May 2005, the Committee of Chiefs of Military Medical Services (COMEDS) in the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) of the 26 NATO nations asked the Human Factors and Medicine panel of the NATO Research and Technology Organisation to start a research group on Child Warriors as the Opposing Force. In November 2004, the COMEDS Working Group on Military Psychiatry already identified the following psychological issues potentially related to confrontation of deployed troops with children as the opposing force (see Table 1).

Table 1: Potentially Psychological Issues on the Confrontation with Child Soldiers (COMEDS/WGMP, November 2004).

| |
|---|
| 1) Increasingly, children, contrary to the rules of war and the Geneva Conventions, are being employed as combatants. |
| 2) Literature searches reveal little or no peer-reviewed publications on the management of those personnel who have been called to confront child soldiers. The subsequent recommendations of the WGMP reflect its expert opinion and are so far not evidence-based. |
| 3) Uncertainty about the legal status of child soldiers may add to the stress of deployed personnel. Legal advice should be sought urgently. |
| 4) It is strongly recommended that commanders ensure that their command is versed in the knowledge of the legal and ethical issues associated with operational involvement with child soldiers. It is the responsibility of the chain of command to ensure commanders are aware of issues associated with child soldiers. |

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| 5) Limited clinical experience suggests that some personnel who have engaged in combat or killed children find this experience to be particularly traumatic. When it is experienced as traumatic it is often experienced as more traumatic than similar, non-child exposure. Personnel are less likely to discuss or acknowledge these experiences. |
| 6) Symptoms will not be fundamentally different from other stress injuries although depression, shame and/or guilt may predominate. For these reasons some personnel will be more inclined to avoid addressing their symptoms. Psychological injury arising from operations involving child soldiers should be managed similarly to other stress injuries. |
| 7) Preparatory activity may help to prevent subsequent psychological injury and therefore there is a need for accurate medical intelligence to prepare troops for the possibility of facing child soldiers. Accordingly, it is strongly recommended that pre- deployment preparation incorporate scenarios or other such means by which trainees become aware that they may engage child soldiers. These troops may be at greater risk, and therefore may need closer follow-up. |
| 8) Media coverage may have a significant negative impact upon deployed military members or post-deployed members who may have engaged child soldiers. Leadership needs to be aware of this potential negative role and be skilled at dealing with it. |
| 9) Child soldiers may need medical care provided by military forces. Medical personnel will need to be aware of the special care needs of this patient population. Similarly, military police and others will need to be prepared to handle this population. |

From Table 1 it appears that this study addresses child soldiers in stead of child warriors, presumably inspired by their highly organized and disciplined working environment of the authors. Nevertheless, the focus of this chapter is on the consequences of the confrontation with child warriors as the opposing force. Hence, many other issues related to the phenomenon of child soldiers like recruiting and exploiting child soldiers, legal issues in disarmament and detention of child soldiers or crowd control cannot be analysed in this article. In July 2006 the Human Factors and Medicine Panel organised an exploratory team meeting, in which several aspects of child warriors as the opposing force were explored. This chapter provides an overview of this explorative research and some guidance for the way ahead to address the emerging needs the armed forces in their engagement with child warriors.

2.3 SOME FRONTLINE OBSERVATIONS OF CHILD WARRIORS AS THE OPPOSING FORCE

During a symposium on Stress and Psychological Support in April 2006¹, major general Royal Netherlands Marine Corps Patrick C. Cammaert delivered a keynote speech on his personal strategies on stress and psychological support. At that time, general Cammaert was Division Commander of the United Nations Mission in the Free Republic of the Congo (MONUC) in Central Africa. In an interview he stated that the confrontation with child warriors is so common in the African theatre, that he was surprised with the questions on the mere existence of the phenomenon. In another interview which was broadcasted by the BBC radio on the 2nd of May 2006, he also mentioned the stress that originates from the confrontation with child warriors. As in other interviews with mass media, he stressed the moral dilemma which comes from this confrontation with child warriors. On the one hand the engagement with children provokes the provision of safety and care, as on the other hand child warriors produce a real life threat, as every

¹ The proceedings of this symposium can be found on www.rta.nato.int under the Human Factors and Medicine Panel publication RTO-MP-HFM-134.

other armed opponent. The psychological burden from this moral dilemma from the battlefield is also described by Singer [4, 5, 6], Speckhard [7] and Hacker Hughes [8].

2.3.1 Western Mass Media Reports on the Actions of Child Warriors

Singer² reports from open sources in the Western mass media:

‘Western forces are increasingly coming into conflict with child soldiers. A notable early example was the British Operation ‘Barras,’ carried out by the Special Air Service (SAS) against the West Side Boys militia in Sierra Leone (2000) that had taken a squad of British troops hostage. After the 11 September 2001 attacks on the US, the prevalence of child soldiers in every zone of the war on terrorism is making the issue of designing Western policies for dealing with them increasingly urgent.

In January 2002, Sergeant Nathan Chapman became the first US serviceman to be killed by hostile fire in the war on terrorism. The sniper who shot the Green Beret trooper was a 14-year-old Afghan boy. US soldiers continue to report encounters with child soldiers in Afghanistan. On 9 August 2004, the Washington Post reported on the youngest child soldier faced so far in Afghanistan, a 12-year-old boy who was captured in 2004 after being wounded during a Taliban ambush of a convoy.

On 23 April 2003, the Miami Herald reported that at least six boys aged between 13 and 16 were captured by US forces in Afghanistan in the initial fighting and taken to the detainee facility at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. They were housed in a special wing entitled Camp Iguana. According to a Time article published on 8 December 2003, several more youths aged between 16 and 18 are thought to be held in the regular facility for adult detainees at Camp X-ray.

Under Saddam Hussein, Iraq built up an entire apparatus in the 1990s designed to pull children into the military realm and bolster societal control. This included the Ashbal Saddam (‘Saddam’s lion cubs’), a paramilitary force of boys between 10 and 15 years old that acted as a feeder into the Saddam Fedayeen units, which proved more aggressive than the Iraqi army during the invasion. US forces engaged with Iraqi child soldiers in fighting in at least three cities, Nasariyah, Mosul and Karbala. In addition, a report by the UK Daily Telegraph on 4 April 2003 claimed there were many instances of children being used as human shields by regime loyalists during the fighting’.

These reports form the Western mass media clearly demonstrate that child warriors are more effective than innocently provoking immediate reactions of care. For military forces that have to prepare on their confrontation with child soldiers their first lesson should read: take them as seriously as every other armed opponent.

2.3.2 The African and Afghanistan Theatres

As stated in the introduction of this chapter, the presence of child warriors in the African theatre is part of every day life in many places. Child warriors earn a living by waging war or setting up checkpoints for bribery of the local population. Their education takes place in doing this, which makes them very professional soldiers. Considering their weapons to be toys and their wars to be play, they are fearless. Their lack of the parental role allows them to use extreme cruelty, which adds to their effectiveness. According to the German preparation guidance for the deployment of German troops in Africa [9], child warriors are professional opponents. Any transition of Western European reflex reactions to consider children as innocent and worth protection will be dangerous and even can be fatal.

In the Afghanistan theatre children are used to weapons, as they are part of every day life, because of the many years of ongoing war.

² See Note 5.

All groups started to bring weapons into the country. After a few months every corner was full of weapons and rifles. Therefore it was so easy to train with weapons. In stead of toys every one of us has a lot of weapons.

Singer quotes a 12 year old opponent of the United States Forces in Afghanistan:

Last night I fired a rocket propelled grenade against a tank. The Americans are weak. They fight for money or status and squeal like pigs when they die. But we will kill the unbelievers because faith is the most powerful weapon.

In the South American theatre similar developments can be expected. A child soldier of Colombia reports:

I saw my cousin, as he was taking guard of rifles. Once, I took one of these rifles without his permission. When you are young, you are very curious on such weapons, how they look, how they shoot and everything.

The combination of the citations above with the huge investments in weapons by for instance countries like Venezuela, leads to the expectation that child soldiers will act in other theatres more and more. And these child warriors do not stop at national borders. It is estimated that in for instance East Congo more than 30.000 child warriors are active, coming from the Free Republic of Congo, but also from Angola, Burundi, Kenya, Ruanda and Uganda [10].

2.3.3 Two Case Studies on the Psychological Suffering after the Confrontation with Child Warriors

The case studies, which are related to the confrontation with child warriors, originate from the professional experience of psychological experts of the Veterans Institute in Doorn, the Netherlands. The first case comes from a typical peacekeeping operation of the United Nations in 1995, of which in retrospect the violent character was underestimated by the Dutch government and the Dutch armed forces. The second case also originates from this Veterans Institute, but goes back to 1944, when Royal Netherlands naval officers participated as navigators in the bombing of occupied Europe.

During the deployment of Dutch units in Bosnia in 1995 a Dutch non-commissioned officer (NCO) made a transit tour to another compound in a Mercedes Benz all terrain vehicle. During one of the stops at a roadblock, which was controlled by Serbian forces, he was forced to come out of his vehicle in order to being interrogated. One of the soldiers at this roadblock was a child warrior, not older than 15 years. This child warrior cocked his rifle with the loop against the head of the Dutch NCO. The interrogation was carried out by other Serbian soldiers and the NCO never saw the child warrior again. After redeployment to the Netherlands he resumed his duties in military barracks. Before he retired at the age of 50 he deployed in two other operations.

After his retirement the NCO developed a chronic Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), which devastated his sleep and made him hyper aroused at daytime. Due to this hyper arousal, he got very easily upset, or 'short-fused' as it is called by insiders. His family motivated him to seek treatment for his complaints at the Central Military Hospital in Utrecht. During the therapeutic sessions of the cognitive behavioural therapy, it appeared that the image of the child warrior, cocking his rifle against the head of the NCO was the worst experience. The very image was so powerful because of the huge contrast between his own powerful military role, fully supported by the international community and morally justified and the child warrior, seemingly powerless but fully controlling the situation without any moral limitations. Part of the cognitive behavioural therapy is the effective questioning of the assumptions in this image, like 'were you so powerful as you thought you were' and 'was the child soldier so powerless as you thought he was?'

The second case goes back to 1944, when allied air operations above occupied Europe also included the bombing of Normandy villages to prepare for D-Day on the 6th of June 1944, the gigantic amphibious operation Overlord, which was the beginning of the liberation of occupied Europe. In these bombings, a Royal Netherlands Navy officer participated as naval aircraft navigator for a Dutch squadron on Mitchell B-25 C type aircraft of Navy Aviation. He survived the war, but was heavily occupied by his war-experiences in the sixty years after the war, until his very last days in 2004. Especially the wiping out of a large part of a French village by mistake, as he in his role as leading navigator pushed the bombing-button far too early, wrecked his peace of mind. In telling his stories over and over again, he also got very upset every time he told that the German anti-aircraft gunners were children of the Hitler Jugend at the age of 16, effectively killing his colleagues and taking out many aircraft, which exploded in full flight when their entire bomb load detonated at once, also threatening other aircraft in the squadron. The assumptions mentioned earlier might also apply in this confrontation with these child warriors, like 'were you so powerful as you thought you were' and 'were these child warriors as powerless as you thought they were?'

2.3.4 Impact of Asymmetric Warfare on the Exploitation of Child Warriors

Asymmetrical warfare is already described as an armed conflict in which the conventional armed forces of one party, which uses regular means, is opposed by an unconventional enemy using irregular means. A very sad example of the unconventional enemy is the child warrior. Failing states are not able to provide conventional armed forces to prevent large scale conflicts such as civil wars, in which warlords rule and recruit children to exploit and abuse them. Failing states neither are able to provide police forces, which can prevent criminals to exploit these children for different criminal purposes but using similar mechanisms, only on a smaller scale. As soon as states fail to organise themselves, the chances of the exploitation and abuse of children as warriors or criminals raise dramatically. So first and foremost, the protection of children to these threats is a political responsibility of utmost importance. In the confrontation with child soldiers, regular forces are at high risk for losing the international support when mass media report from the viewpoint of the child warriors only [11]. In the war in Iraq United States Marines have captured over hundred child warriors, which were disarmed and taken to Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. On them the plea of Thomas Hammerberg (SWE) of the United Nations Higher Commissioner for Human Rights fits that prisoners (of war) should be treated with dignity. Sad examples of maltreatment of prisoners in the Abu Graib prison in Iraq showed again how quick and often vulnerable people become the victim of the rage for power of people in charge, like guards or other prison personnel. Not much imagination is needed to foresee incidents of maltreatment of child warriors as prisoners, one they have been captured after fierce fights.

2.4 TRANSACTIONAL ANALYSIS OF CHILD SOLDIERS AS THE OPPOSING FORCE [12]

2.4.1 Transactional Analysis

The ego states of a child, an adult and a parent are described by Sigmund Freud, the founding father of psycho-analysis, as essential layers of consciousness. Although Freud's work has been profoundly criticized, especially on the lack of empirical evidence, it has proven to be very useful in the description of behaviours, originating from these ego states. Even some authors on management of organizations use these ego states to describe the interactions within organizations [13]. The ego state of the child is reflected in acting on basic needs as hunger, thirst, joy or rage, by Freud condensed to the thrills of 'eros' or lust for life and 'thanatos', lust for death. So the ego state of the child already contains a lust for death, which fosters the acts of the child warrior. In this respect, waging war is a quite natural state, with its own beauty and attractions, as described by Michael Herr in 'Dispatches [14]', in which he shows American Vietnam veterans and their hunger to go back to the excitements of their battles. The ego state of the parent is reflected in acts inspired by moral judgment, basically determining what is right and what is

wrong. The ego state of the adult seeks for compromises between the lusts of the ego state of the child and the moral judgments of the ego state of the adult. Figure 1 presents the ego states, together with parallel and conflicting transactions (see Figure 1).

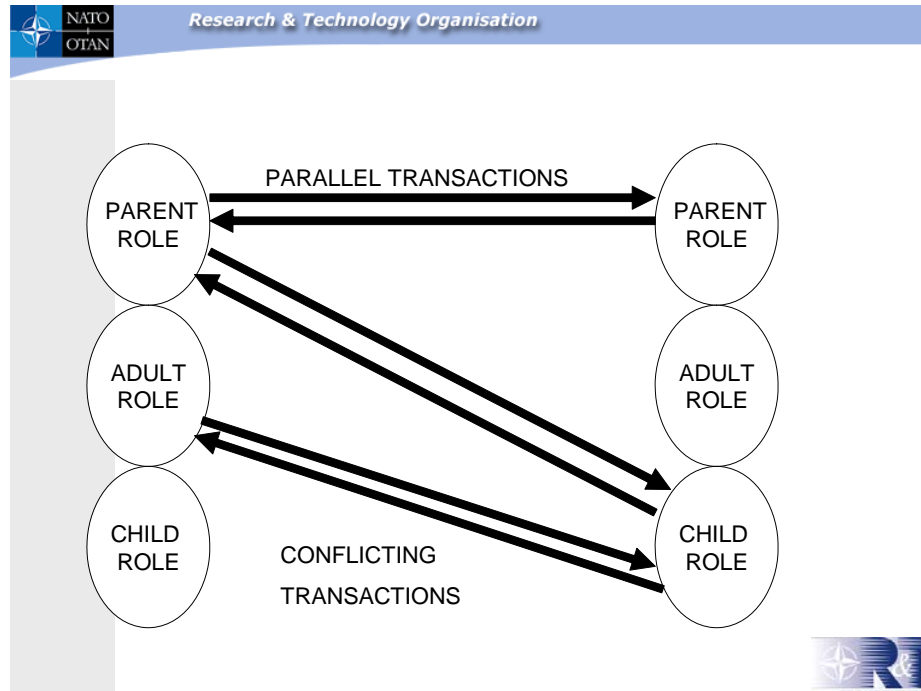


Figure 1: Ego States of Two Persons in Interaction with Both Parallel and Conflicting Transactions.

The ego states presented in Figure 1 were used in analyses of human interaction or transactions. Parallel transactions, like some one in his ego state of a child suggesting to another one to drink something or play together, go smoothly as it refers to the same ego state of a child. In this respect children can call other children into the state of child warrior, as this state satisfies the lust for death and killing. Probably hard to accept is that waging war has its attraction, like being in power of someone to the extent of deciding between his life and death. It also brings children the joy of experiencing new sensations, like 'a saw his skull splitting like a coconut' [15]. Someone stating from his ego state of a parent that people are using too much alcoholic beverages gets a parallel transaction when the answer is 'it should be forbidden', which reflects a typical parental ego state. Also from their very nature transactions from the parent to a child and vice versa go well, as most people grow up as a child in close relations with parents or people who act out the parental ego state. And exactly this 'nurturing' [16] response evoked at the very first moment when parents see children is the root cause of psychological suffering after a violent confrontation with child warriors. In addition to that, the adult ego state of the professional soldier, which has to seek compromises between his lusts and the conventions of war or the rules of engagement. Transactions between the ego state of the adult will always conflict with the ego states of child warriors, as shown in Figure 1.

2.4.2 A Transactional Analysis of Child Warriors on the Battlefield

In the context of child soldiers, transactional analysis focuses on the child role, in which immediate satisfaction of very basic needs like food, but also sex and violence, or 'eros' and 'thanatos', are crucial. Fed by these very natural drives, the existence of child soldiers is very natural and will tend to increase, especially with more than 12 million AIDS orphans and other disconnected children on the African continent in 2003 [17]. In that respect, the hope seems idle that a decrease of child soldiers can be

expected, even now Thomas Lubanga DYLO, the first recruiter of child soldiers was brought to court³. In a transactional perspective such a parental intervention, like bringing an offender to court, does not decrease the needs and drives of child warriors, who seek immediate satisfaction of their needs, with or without a recruiter or leader. The transactional analysis also shows the lack of learning adult or parental roles by the mere lacking of persons who act in parental roles. The leader of a gang of child soldiers easily earns the authority of parental roles as he is the only one, who is acting or is being accepted in this role. However, after the first glimpse it appears that the parental role of such a leader is only providing very little moral guidance, only harsh directions for fostering obedience and a competition between the children in growing up to the adult state of a warrior. Providing leadership, power and a living are key factors in creating and maintaining a strong and lasting relation of obedience beyond any question. By these features of the situations where the child soldiers live and work in, it becomes very clear that moral limitations to their behavior do not exist within their own personalities. The only limits are set by their leaders, which have a well defined interest in keeping them acting as atrociously as they can, in order to maximize their fighting and deterring power. The chance of being psychologically wounded in the confrontation with child soldiers increases with their atrocity and their mere lack of moral hesitations. Especially the chance of being psychologically wounded and how to recover from these wounds has to be part of this research, which will enable to identify psychological issues in the confrontation with child soldiers.

2.5 SHOCK, SHAME AND GUILT

In trying to understand the reports of soldiers of conventional armed forces who encountered child warriors, the awareness of the concepts of shock, shame and guilt is critical. Shock is the intense psychological reaction on the confrontation with something totally unexpected. As depicted earlier, at a first glimpse the confrontation with children provokes beliefs on their innocence, harmlessness and their need to be taken care of. In the confrontation with child warriors these beliefs are turning into their opposites split seconds later, or not at all when the conventional soldiers fails to protect and defend himself. In other sad scenarios, the opposing child warrior is shot. In all those cases shock is the natural but overwhelming result and in the cases of shooting child warriors, shame and guilt raise immediately, followed by a heavy psychological burden. In every case of lethal victims and survivors the survivor guilt surfaces in the question 'why did they die and why did I survive'? This question is even more difficult to answer when the lethal victims are children. This is already true in accidents, in which children died. In the more confronting case, in which children were killed by very necessary acts of self defence against child warriors, these questions arising from survivor guilt are even more difficult to answer. If people cannot cope with the almost permanent mental burden of answering these questions, even their own life is at risk in the very end, as some of them die, crushed by self blame [18] or suicide [19].

2.5.1 How to Support Military Personnel Who Engage Child Warriors

Mental health care in modern military operations encompasses all the stages of the deployment cycle from the earliest warning and education to the redeployment and care for the home front. A recently published military leader's guide for psychological support across the deployment cycle describes this support in these stages [20]. However, the psychological burden of the confrontation with child warriors is not mentioned in this guide. To prevent or heal the psychological wounds of the confrontation with child warriors, especially shame and guilt have to be dealt with in all these stages. In contrary to the virtues of proven courage stemming from the victory on adult warriors, who were equally strong or even stronger, hardly any pride can be taken in killing child warriors, who at a first and very last glimpse were less strong or even chanceless. Shame and survivor guilt result from killing child warriors, out of mere self-defence or lack of self-control to use less lethal interventions. It appears that these psychological burdens already develop when the use of overwhelming firepower results in mass casualties, as mentioned in the second case study, but more recently also in the allied raid on Baghdad in the beginning of the second Gulf War.

³ Reported by the UN Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict on 29 JAN 2007.

A chaplain, who accompanied the ‘first-in-forces’ reported that the moral of the raiding troops was very low when they saw the macabre results of their massive superiority in firepower, resulting in hundreds of casualties among Iraqi soldiers and civilians [21]. Feelings of shame and guilt easily arise from situations, which are another important feature of asymmetrical warfare. These feelings of shame and guilt are not extensively addressed in the military leaders’ guide for psychological support across the deployment cycle. The focus of this guide is on the more well studied stressors of the battlefield like harsh living conditions and fighting conditions and various types of life threat, with particular attention paid to the loss of comrades by enemy fire, friendly fire, suicide or accidents.

In the *pre deployment stage* it should be made clear that a child warrior is an effective combatant, whose bullets can be as lethal as the bullets of any other armed opponent. This insight might prevent the shame and guilt, once soldiers have to fight against child warriors during the actual deployment. The Rules of Engagement should be checked on their relevance for the confrontation with child warriors regarding fighting, arresting and disarming them. From lessons learned in riot control it is to be recommended to take out the leading figures in gangs of these child warriors, as this fosters their disorganization and shattering. Military leaders have a considerable responsibility for their troops in the *deployment stage*, when they engage child warriors. Social leadership, shown by joining in on patrols and listening actively on post and in ‘down time’ can detect the heavy burden for some who cannot cope with this confrontation. It is also recommended to military leaders to challenge the taboo that rests on the use of violence against child warriors. By raising the issue of child soldiers in their briefings or talks during ‘down time’ they create the right atmosphere to openly discuss the realities of waging war, including the confrontation with child warriors.

In the *post-deployment-stage* the majority of the deployed unit can address their issues with their confrontation with child warriors in buddy-contacts and leader’s interventions like group wise decompression talks and social activities. Persons with risk factors for developing mental health problems, like long and intense combat exposure in combination with misuse of alcohol or drugs, hyper arousal, sleeping problems or a small social network can be detected by trained peers or mental health professionals. In this detection special attention should be paid to feelings of shame and guilt, possibly arising from the confrontation with child soldiers. In case of the need for professional mental health care interventions the cognitive behavioral therapy can challenge the assumptions about the ego state of the professional soldier and the ego state of the child warrior. Like in the case studies, questions should be asked on the assumed powerfulness of the professional soldier and the assumed powerlessness of the child warrior in order to prevent shame and guilt doing their devastating work on the military mental health. In the specific case of shame and guilt about killing child warriors these feelings of shame and guilt can be shared in a confidential contact with a counselor of mental health professional. When therapy is indicated, it is possible to follow the methods of the rational emotive behavioral therapy, which assumes that people are not upset by what happens to them, but by their attitude that they adopt to the things that happen to them. In this therapy questions can be asked like ‘what is really bad about my acts’, ‘where is the evidence coming from that they are unethical or where is the evidence that I always must be right to consider myself worthy?’ [22]

2.5.2 The NATO Way Ahead in Child Warriors as the Opposing Force

As stated before, military personnel in NATO operations have to cope with the actual threat, posed by these child warriors and the subsequent psychological issues in fighting these child warriors. In restoring peace in the post war era, the disarmament and treatment of child warriors deserves attention also. In providing good practices in military mental health care, the actual confrontation with child warriors might relate to shame and guilt and subsequent mental health problems. An HFM exploratory team already summarized the main issues and the HFM Panel Business Meeting of October 2006 decided to propose a follow on this activity with an RTO Task Group, which had an extended kick-off meeting in November 2007 and produced this final report of that meeting to satisfy the emerging needs of the NATO operational community in this area.



Figure 2: The West Side Boys who Participated in Operation 'Barras' in Sierra Leone (not hesitant to open fire or to use extreme cruelty).

The NATO Research and Technology Board recommended to open this RTO task group to Middle-East participants, as for instance the Israel Defence Forces have extended numbers of military personnel who engaged child warriors and opponents.

Among the objectives of this RTO task group the following issues are listed already. In the first place the development of child warriors as the opposing force needs to be estimated by size and impact for ongoing and future NATO operations. In the second place, ethical issues arise from fighting child warriors, as it comprises the conflict between the need for protection of children and defending one's own safety. Legal issues might originate from international or national laws on warfare and Rules of Engagement in peacekeeping operations have to be studied in the third place. In the fourth place, psychological issues might originate from the life threat posed upon one who is presumed to be vulnerable and innocent. Last but not least, all military personnel should be aware of good practices in coping with the experiences of fighting child warriors and in case of mental health problems, effective treatment should be tailored to cope with the feelings of shame and guilt. In doing so, the RTO task group tries to accomplish the following six goals (see Table 2).

Table 2: Goals of the NATO RTO Task Group on Child Warriors as the Opposing Force.

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|---|
| 1) To estimate the occurrence and impact of child warriors on military personnel in current and future NATO operations. |
| 2) To investigate the ethical and legal issues applying to the fight of child warriors. |
| 3) To develop awareness of moral dilemmas in fighting child warriors, in relation to Rules of Engagement. |
| 4) To develop guidelines for effective engagement, disarmament and treatment of child warriors. |
| 5) To recommend good practices in coping with experiences of fighting child warriors, especially on the relation between fighting child warriors, shame and guilt and their relation to mental health problems. |
| 6) To tailor good practices of military mental health care to effective treatment of psychological problems stemming from the confrontation with child warriors. |

It can be concluded that the confrontation with child warriors is part of modern military operations in asymmetrical warfare. The confrontation with them is particular difficult as it is necessary to overcome normal or Western European or North American assumptions on the interaction with children. The confrontation with child warriors is very time critical as it decides between life and death in a split second. Quite on the contrary this confrontation is ever lasting also, as it needs a thoroughly rethinking of assumptions on children, especially by those who killed child warriors and have children themselves.

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Chapter 3 – MORAL PROFESSIONALISM AND CHILD SOLDIERS

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3.1 INTRODUCTION

The primacy of politics implies that politicians decide when and where they send their armed forces. It also implies, especially in democratic societies, that these armed forces are expected to behave in accordance with basic human values. Thus professionalism in a military context includes moral professionalism. The necessity of this inclusion is illustrated in the confrontation with child soldiers as the opposing force and as such it will be the focus of this chapter.

The confrontation with child soldiers often poses a tragic moral dilemma. Dealing with these dilemmas in a morally responsible way is part of the moral professionalism and moral competence military personnel should be trained for. As will be indicated in this chapter, this also implies learning how to develop the adequate resilience to carry the burden of the difficult moral choices that have to be made.

3.2 MORAL AGENCY VERSUS MORAL DISENGAGEMENT

Military professionals also need to be professionals in a moral and ethical sense. The reason for this is obvious: The absence of moral professionalism can easily lead to moral disengagement. In Bandura's discussion of the concept 'moral disengagement' it becomes clear that disengaging from the moral dimension of situations is the result of the disappearance or blotting out of moral agency. Moral agency has both an inhibitative and a proactive form; the inhibitative form implies the power to refrain from behaving inhumanely and the proactive form implies the power to behave humanely (Bandura 1999). The absence of moral agency implies the absence of the 'self sanctions' that are acquired in moral development, the development in which external rules and values become internal rules and values. In this sense moral education can be seen as the way to help children (and adults) develop self sanctions and thus help them to become moral agents.

However, being a moral agent and, what is even more important, staying a moral agent is not easy. The reason for this is the pertinacious presence of moral disengagement tendencies. Bandura distinguishes seven of these tendencies:

- 1) *Moral justification*, which implies the cognitive reconstruction of one's detrimental behaviour in accordance with socially and morally acceptable principles. For instance the violation of human rights is justified by an appeal to the 'war on terror', or military necessity.
- 2) *Euphemistic labelling*, which indicates that reprehensive conduct is made acceptable by using language that disguises and obscures this reprehensive aspect. Bandura refers to the term collateral damage in this context and to the Watergate hearings in which 'lies' were referred to as 'different versions of the facts' (o.c. 195).
- 3) *Advantageous comparison*, implies comparing detrimental conduct with even more detrimental conduct so that the less detrimental conduct can be excused. This can for instance be illustrated by the statement that the treatment of prisoners in the Abu Graib prison was nothing compared to the way Saddam Hussein treated his prisoners.
- 4) *Displacement of responsibility*, is, as the term indicates the tendency to lay the responsibility for harmful actions in someone else's hands, which implies that one does not feel one's personal

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responsibility. The 'Befehl ist Befehl' motto of Eichmann and his Nazi colleagues can serve as a good example.

- 5) *Diffusion of responsibility* also implies the diminishing of one's personal responsibility. It creates a situation in which it is not clear who is responsible for what. And when no one feels responsible the effect of actions can be extremely harmful. Group decisions and collective actions can have this harmful effect as for instance football riots demonstrate. Research also shows that people act more cruelly under group responsibility.
- 6) *Disregard or distortion of responsibility* implies ignoring or minimizing the effects of harmful conduct.
- 7) *Dehumanisation* is the tendency to strip people of human qualities. The Nazi camps, in which people were robbed of all their personal belongings and differentiating aspects, including their names, can serve as an example. However, using terms like 'worms' and 'gooks' for one's adversaries can be the first step down this slippery slope of moral disengagement.

3.3 MORAL COMPETENCE AND MORAL PROFESSIONALISM

Moral disengagement is a slow and gradual process of eliminating 'self sanctions' and it thus makes the development of moral agency necessary. Moral agency in the armed forces is related to moral competence and moral professionalism, in the sense that moral professionalism implies the ability to apply one's moral competence or one's moral agency to military practice. Moral competence is thus a prerequisite for moral professionalism. The term moral competence as introduced by Karssing (2000) includes the following 6 aspects when applied to a military context: 1) Awareness of the moral dimension, which implies being able to see, preferably in advance, which values are at risk and are threatened with violation. Sometimes, this is quite clear, but often it is not. And even if the moral dimension is clear for many, it may not be for particular individuals, who suffer from moral blindness. I mention in passing that, if it appears that a person's moral blindness is incurable, this person is unsuitable for a career in the military, given the necessity for moral professionalism. Being able to identify the moral dimension assumes the existence of a particular state of awareness. One must know that there is a moral question or dilemma at issue and be able to identify the values and moral interests at play. Knowing and identifying, however, are not enough, for they do not necessarily imply that one is able to make an adequate evaluation concerning the variables. One therefore also needs 2) moral judgement about which one 3) can communicate. Subsequently, one must 4) be able and willing to act (if one so decides) and to do so in a morally responsible way. And most important, 5) one must be able and willing to be held accountable for one's actions and decisions. A sixth aspect can be added with regard to the impact of the confrontation with moral questions and dilemma's on military personnel. This impact can be severe. It thus requires 6) resilience on the part of the man or women in question. Even if one is able to act in a morally responsible way in confrontation with a moral dilemma, and thus demonstrate the above mentioned aspects of moral competence, one can still be severely damaged by the choice one had to make. Especially with regard to tragic moral dilemma's the impact on mental health can be severe. The confrontation with a child soldier can pose such a tragic moral dilemma. In dealing with this dilemma knowledge of and insight in the phenomenon of child soldiers play an important role.

3.4 CHILD SOLDIERS

Singer (2006) stresses the fact that child soldiers form a difficult subject; a subject that has been neglected for a long time. These child soldiers are not merely children, as Singer points out, they can be ruthless killers that are capable of the most brutish and violent actions. They know no other world than their world of violence.

As Singer indicates, it is precisely the immaturity of children that makes it possible that they can be exploited. This exploitation takes place in situation in which the rules of law and also the rules of war have disappeared. These situations are extremely violent. Yet, according to Singer, in most cultures children are barred from waging war. This is not only the case in Europe, but also in Africa. Singer presents the examples of the Zulu community, in which the age for a soldier was 18 and communities from the Kano area in West Africa where only married men could become soldiers. Not being married indicated not being mature. Of course the exclusion of children also had pragmatic reasons. Pre-modern weapons demanded a lot of strength.

However, notwithstanding the fact that children were barred from waging war, there are also examples of the deployment of children. This sometimes happened because children pretended to be older than they actually were, yet there are also examples of the deployment of children that were known to be children, as was the case with the Hitler Jugend. Singer considers these examples as the proverbial exceptions that prove the rule. According to Singer, children were never an essential and integral part of military units. This seems to have changed. UNICEF indicates that, at present, there are approximately 300,000 child soldiers involved in more than 30 conflicts worldwide. With regard to these figures Gracia Machel, the former ‘first lady’ of Mozambique is clear:

“These statistics are shocking enough, but more chilling is the conclusion to be drawn from them: more and more of the world is being sucked into a desolate moral vacuum. This is a space devoid of the most basic human values; a space in which children are slaughtered, raped, and maimed; a space in which children are exploited as soldiers; a space in which children are starved and exposed to extreme brutality. Such unregulated terror and violence speak of deliberate victimization. There are few further depths to which humanity can sink.” (Singer, 2006, p.30)

3.4.1 Hobbesian Situations

The involvement of children in more than 30 conflicts worldwide is often caused by a combination of several factors. One of the most important factors is undoubtedly the Hobbesian pre-state situation of many of the areas in which these conflicts take place. This pre-state situation was described by the English philosopher Thomas Hobbes in his book *Leviathan* in the 17th century. It seems not to have lost its meaning and relevance with regard to the present-day ‘failed state’ or ‘fragile state’. The pre-state situation or the ‘state of nature’ as Hobbes called it, is a “war of every man against every man”. It is a situation in which only the right of the strongest counts, due to scarcity of sources and an abundance of people needing these sources. That is why man is a wolf for his fellow man: *homo homini lupus*. Life under these circumstances is “solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short”. Hobbes conclusion, which seems still relevant, is that a state is needed to end this war of all against all. The rule of law, issued by the state and supported by the people, warrants the protection and security that people need to live their life without being afraid to become the victim of the violence of others.

This lack of the rule of law and a government to provide it, creates a window of opportunity for those hungry for power. As indicated, in situations like these, where the right of the strongest rules, the strongest and most powerful is seldom someone who is liked for his empathic qualities; it is mostly someone who is feared for his ruthlessness.

3.5 WHY DO CHILDREN BECOME SOLDIERS?

As indicated in the last section, the involvement of children in conflicts is often a combination of several factors. In this section I would like to name a few of these factors and illustrate the relevance and impact of these factors with the help of the words of former child soldiers.

3.5.1 War, Poverty and Unemployment

War, poverty and unemployment, which are directly related to the Hobbesian situation discussed in Section 3.4, seem to form an important factor.

“An army recruitment unit arrived at my village and demanded two recruits. Those who could not pay 3000 kyat (\$400) had to join the army. “(Z., age 15, Singer, 2006, p.31)

“It’s because of the war. When it’s the war, you don’t choose... Because if you have weapons, you can defend yourself, if you don’t have any, you are beaten, one kills you, and one rapes you, even the boys.” (Christine DRC, Brett, 2004, p.13)

“We faced terrible problems because of the war. If not for the war we would have lived happily. My family and most of the village suffered badly due to economical problems. At that time it was very difficult to earn money. We suffered a lot due to this.” (Sabesan, Sri Lanka, Brett, 2004, p.14)

“The main cause of going there was unemployment, I think. I had nothing to do here so I went there. If you have some business or you are studying then you do not think about taking part in Jihad”. (Aziz, Pakistan, Brett, 2004, p.23)

“As you know, there was no work here, so joining up paid...Above all, in this case you were allowed to loot, so you went in the banks, the safes, the taxis”. (Albert, Congo-Brazzaville, Brett, 2004, p.43)

3.5.2 Education

Education can also play a crucial role in the participation of children in wars and conflicts. It can be both a pull and push factor. In other words, children may drop out of school because school does not seem to be able to offer them what they need most in certain periods of their life, or school might be the place where children are made to see the importance of their role as a soldier

“Our schoolteacher used to tell us that Jihad is a religious duty of every Muslim” (Aziz, Pakistan, Brett, 2004, p.19)

“We were taught in the madrassah that one who sacrifices his life in Jihad, he is a martyr and will be rewarded generously. Besides he will recommend other people for Paradise.” (Ehtesham, Pakistan, Brett, 2004, p.19)

3.5.3 Family

In the same way that school can be both a pull and push factor, family can also be a pull and push factor for children to become involved in war and conflict.

“There were two of my cousins who had joined the LTTE. They used to come home in the night carrying arms. I really did not understand the meaning behind this big war when I was small, but I used to be attracted by the uniforms and the guns, even though I could only touch the guns. They used to boast of their heroic experience”. (Sathiyam, Sri Lanka, Brett, 2004, p.29)

“I signed up to protect my sister, because a lot of boys attacked girls, women, and mothers. My brother was not around, he had fled the village. I had to pay to stop the militaries from taking my sister. Then I had a sister that was pregnant, so we needed the money”. (Albert, Congo Brazzaville, Brett, 2004, p.67)

“I first knew about the war when my father was killed. So I joined. There was nothing else I could do then. I joined willingly. My first reaction was to take revenge and kill many soldiers who attacked our village at that time who had killed my father. By that time the high school was burnt, all of my belongings burnt down, no education for me again, and my mother was ill and abandoned in our house and died, so I thought I can never be a human being again. That is why I joined them.” (Momoh, Sierra Leone, Brett, 2004, p.69)

3.5.4 Politics and Ideology

Politics and ideology might also be a reason for joining an army of child soldiers.

“Last night I fired a rocket-propelled grenade against a tank. The Americans are weak. They fight for money and status and squeal like pigs when they die. But we will kill the unbelievers because faith is the most powerful weapon”. (M. age 12, Singer, 2006, p.23)

“I joined the AFDL (Alliance des Forces Democratique pour la Liberation du Congo-Zaire) to drive out Mobutu, to drive out misery, to make the life better....I’m waiting for the Good Samaritan who will come to help me. I am tired: too much demagoguery, too many promises, and at the end nothing.” (Michel, DRC, Brett, 2004, p.27)

3.5.5 Moral Development of Children and Adolescents

The moral development of children and adolescents also forms an important reason for both becoming a child soldier and for recruiting child soldiers. As is indicated in the quotes below, children are good soldiers. They are loyal, they are good fighters and they can easily be trained and influenced. Because their moral development has not yet fully matured or has not had the opportunity to develop at all, children can be ruthless. The ability for moral reasoning and moral judgement is deficient and sometimes blocked due to former experiences or lack of a caring surrounding. They can see the most immoral or inhuman act as play or just something that can be done, especially when they are stimulated by friends and adults they look up to.

“Don’t overlook them. They can fight more than we big people...It is hard for them to retreat” (Liberian militia commander, Brett, 2004, p.20)

“We prefer to recruit children at the age of eleven or twelve” (Syed Salahuddin, supreme commander of Hizbul Mujahideen (Kashmir-based militant group) Singer, 2006, p.27)

“Once I met a soldier. I was just walking around, he was walking as well; I was curious, I wanted to know him...I told him that I would come to see him the following day. I was very glad to have spoken to him. He was beautiful! He and his uniform. Strong! He was beautiful and well built, he had a beautiful colour and he was brown. The following day, I left over there. They started to tell stories of soldiers. I was there! Later on, I asked him What I would have to do if I wanted to be a soldier. He said to me: “Hey we’re looking for children like you who want to do everything for their country! He explained me how to leave, he directed me. I told him that I would come.” (Germain, DRC, Brett, 2004, p.55)

“All my friends from my childhood, the ones I used to play cars with, play bandits, they’re all in the same outfit now...the people who like this get a taste for it”. (Carlos, Colombia, Brett, 2004, p.26)

“We were dangerous!.. You know that I was with Vanessa in the front, people had better not come to bother us.. or we killed you! When you are a girl you have to be harder, or the men they don’t respect you”. (Christine, DRC, Brett, 2004, p.85)

3.6 PSYCHOLOGICAL, PHYSICAL AND SOCIAL CONSEQUENCES

The consequences of having been engaged as a child with child soldiers, either voluntarily or forced, leave its marks. The consequences on the physical, the psychological and the social level are grave and numerous and can best be described by the former child soldiers themselves.

“Seven weeks after I arrived there was combat. I was very scared. It was an attack on the paramilitaries. We killed about seven of them. They killed one of us. We had to drink their blood to conquer our fear. Only the scared ones had to do it. I was the most scared of all, because I was the newest and the youngest” (A. age 12, Singer, 2006, p.29)

“I had a friend Juanita, who got into trouble.... We had been friends in civilian life and we shared a tent together. The commander said that it didn’t matter that she was my friend. She had committed an error and had to be killed. I closed my eyes and fired the gun, but I didn’t hit her. So I shot again. The grave was right nearby. I had to bury her and put dirt on top of her. The commander said: “You did very well. Even though you started to cry, you did well. You’ll have to do this again many more times, and you’ll have to learn not to cry.” (A. age 17, Singer, 2006, p. 32)

“They picked me and took me away in the bush where I was forced to become a ‘wife’ to one of the rebels. Being new in the field, on the first night I refused, but on the second night, they said: “Either you give in, or death”. I still tried to refuse, and then the man got serious and knifed me on the head. I became helpless and started bleeding terribly and that was how I got involved in sex at the age of 14 because death was near.” (B. age 16, Singer, 2006, p.34)

“I regret that I fought and hate the war. It took everything from us. I have studied (until) sixth class. If there was no war, I would have already finished school by now” (R. age 18, Singer, 2006, p.26)

“I personally believe that when people are young, others can abuse them. It is my very unfortunate fate that I was drawn into wars. If instead of war skills, I knew other skills and knowledge, now I could use my knowledge and expertise. Then today I would be an engineer or doctor or something else useful for my society and myself. If I knew some skills I could contribute to solve our problems and I could help others. For instance now many Afghan children are illiterate and if I was able to teach I could teach some of them. It is my wish to teach at least alphabets to our children. This was rather better for us than getting involved in war.” (Javad, Afghanistan, Brett, 2004, p.121)

“I want to advise people who want to be rebel fighters, young soldiers, that they should learn from what we have gone through, which is too sad an experience. Those children younger than we are should never again be involved in such a life anymore...what I have seen and undergone is not for a child to experience”. (Arthur, Sierra Leone, Brett, 2004, p.121)

3.7 DISARMAMENT, DEMOBILISATION AND REINTEGRATION

The often far-reaching psychological, physical and social consequences the former child soldier is confronted with are discussed extensively in the special issue of Intervention, *International Journal of Mental Health, Psychosocial Work and Counselling in Areas of Armed Conflict* (2006). This special issue focuses on the disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration of child soldiers. Williamson (2006) discusses this process of disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration of children that were active as, or connected with, child soldiers in the RUF (Revolutionary United Front) in Sierra Leone. With the help of UNICEF, USAID (United States Agency for International Development), DCOF (Displaced Children and Orphans Fund) and the NCDDR (National Committee for Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration), a programme was developed to help the children that had either been abducted or joined voluntarily. After disarmament and demobilisation the children stayed in a so called ICC (Interim Care

Centre) during a period of six week. This period was seen as a period of transition between the activities related to their stay in the ‘army’ and the return to their family. During this period, in which the ICC tried to find the family of the child or find foster parents, the former child soldiers were given activities that focussed on a return to normal life: regular schedules, chores, lessons and learning to behave in an acceptable way.

Williamson also discusses the lessons learned from this programme. To name just a few:

Child soldiers can be both boys and girls and both combatant and non-combatant. Girls and young women connected with ‘fighting units’ risk being excluded from the disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration process, because they are not seen as soldiers. It is important that the decisions that are being made during the DDR process are in accordance with the interests of the child in question and with human rights principles.

Video and audio messages from former child soldiers to their family and their community are important for the reintegration process. It can make people understand what actually happened to the child. Screening family members is also important, as are follow-up, and monitoring the children after return to their family or foster parents.

Williamson stresses the fact that military personnel and military observers should be trained in learning about and dealing with child soldiers and children connected to these child soldier’s units.

3.8 THE NEED FOR MORAL PROFESSIONALISM IN CONFRONTATION WITH CHILD SOLDIERS

As indicated in the first three sections of this chapter, moral professionalism implies the ability and willingness to apply one’s moral competence in one’s professional practice. With regard to the confrontation with child solders this means that moral professionalism is demonstrated before, during and after the actual confrontation with the child soldier. To start with the first: prior to deployment in areas where one might expect child soldiers, military personnel should develop knowledge of and insight in the situation of the child soldier and the factors that are responsible for his or her participation in war and conflict. This is also important with regard to the other phases, especially the post-war phase, in which military personnel also plays a crucial role, as was indicated by Williamson (Section 3.7).

I would like to add that it is important that military personnel should know about initiatives like the one in Sierra Leone and subsequently, should be able and capable to work together with these organisations. Moreover, if there are no organisations or programmes for disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, military personnel should be able and capable to establish these organisations and programmes with the help of both local and international NGOs. It thus seems necessary that military personnel should be trained and educated prior to their confrontation with child soldiers. However, being able to contribute to disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of child soldiers is not the only component of training and educating military personnel should have.

The confrontation with the child soldier as a soldier, and thus with someone who poses an immanent threat, creates a moral dilemma for military personnel. As was indicated in the first three sections of this chapter, this asks for moral professionalism and thus for training and education in this field. One aspect of this training and education might be looking for new strategies in the confrontation with child soldiers, as Singer (2006) suggests. Eliminating the adult leader is one of these strategies, as is creating chaos and confusion, because of children’s fear for the unknown. Using a lot of noise and smoke might also be effective for the same reason. And finally the use of non-lethal technologies, such as acoustic weapons, microwave beam weapons and chemical weapons might be effective. It is clear that with regard to the use

of new strategies, especially non-lethal weapons moral professionalism remains crucial. Yet, new strategies do not nullify the tragic dimension of moral dilemmas. They will remain part of military practice. Thus, being able to cope with moral dilemmas in a morally responsible way is another part of military training and education. How this can be done is discussed in *Military Ethics; The Dutch Approach* (Van Baarda and Verweij 2006). Ethics training and education imply, as was indicated in the first three sections, that military personnel confronted with the tragic dilemma to kill or not to kill a child can lean on and find solid backing in their moral competence and moral professionalism. This implies not only that they will be able to make a morally responsible choice with regard to the dilemma at hand, and be able and willing to account for their actions; it also implies that they have the adequate resilience to carry the burden of the problematic choices they are forced to make. It will thus prevent the tragedy of the child to become the tragedy of the soldier.

3.9 LITERATURE

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Chapter 4 – FACING CHILD SOLDIERS, MORAL PANICS AND “REAL SOLDIERING”: ANTHROPOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES ON THE MILITARIES OF THE INDUSTRIAL DEMOCRACIES

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4.1 INTRODUCTION

In today's world, adolescents and children sometimes act as combatants who directly participate in hostilities. Yet more often they are deployed as auxiliaries (for example, as lookouts or messengers) or in various support roles (as gardening, road maintenance, delivery of food, cleaning, cooking, conveying goods and providing sexual services). Finally, under certain circumstances, they may be used as human shields or for propaganda purposes by government or opposition forces (Boyden and de Berry 2004: xii; United Nations 2002: 13). Since the late 1970s a number of international conventions have been promulgated to limit their use but children continue to be deployed in parts of the world and overwhelmingly in sub-Saharan Africa. Estimates as to their numbers vary. Human Rights Watch (<http://www.hrw.org/campaigns/crp/index.htm>), a human rights lobby, estimates that there are between 200,000 and 300,000 such youngsters in armed conflicts in over twenty countries. Amnesty International (<http://web.amnesty.org/pages/childsoldiers-index-eng>), another such organization, declares somewhat alarmingly,

With new weapons that are lightweight and easy to fire, children are more easily armed, with less training than ever before. Worldwide, more than half a million children under-18 have been recruited into government armed forces, paramilitaries, civil militia and a wide variety of non-state armed groups in more than 85 countries. At any one time, more than 300,000 of these children are actively fighting as soldiers with government armed forces or armed political groups.

In addition, there are various estimations as to the age of the youngest child soldiers with Nordstrom ((2004) documenting an eleven year old, Human Rights Watch declaring that some are as young as eight years old, Amnesty International offering that some are younger than 10 years of age and Singer (in Brookings Institute 2007) contends that some are as young as seven. In countries that are already poor, war tends to deteriorate economic and social conditions, thereby forcing families into further economic hardship. As a result, children may join armed forces or groups to secure daily food and survival (Honwana 2001: 128).

In one of the most comprehensive and cautious overviews of the subject, Boyden (2006: 3) cautions that it is quite “ludicrous to talk about child soldiering as an ‘epidemic’ on the basis of speculative UN figures indicating that the world’s military arena at present contains a mere 250,000 [such young] combatants and support personnel under the age of 18.” In fact it appears “that in most places other than sub-Saharan Africa the number of child soldiers is decreasing and that even in sub-Saharan Africa the evidence of marauding hordes of alienated, angry and aggressive youth simply does not exist.” This appraisal is echoed by a recent United Nations (2005) report that admits that the number of child soldiers is declining.

But what happens when soldiers of the industrial democracies face these young combatants? Such potentially violent engagements can be, as this conference makes abundantly clear, devastating for such troops. Thus for example, in commenting about the U.S. forces, Singer (2003: 29) contends that children are not seen as hated enemies and

U.S. soldiers usually exhibit a great amount of empathy toward children in war-torn societies. Consequently, engagements with child soldiers can be incredibly demoralizing for professional troops and can also affect unit cohesion. For example, there was little official dilemma or controversy over

Allied actions against the *Hitler Jugend* in 1945. The youths were seen as fighting to defend an absolutely evil regime, and that general agreement among the allies was that Hitler's regime had to be completely defeated. Yet the experience of fighting against the *Jugend* was so unsettling to U.S. Armed Forces that troop morale fell to some of the lowest points in the entire war. Likewise, British forces operating in West Africa in 2001 faced deep problems of clinical depression and post-traumatic stress disorder among individual soldiers who had faced child soldiers".

Along these lines, as Meijer (2007) makes clear, a number of people have documented the psychological burdens of facing child soldiers. Against this background, I propose to offer an anthropological perspective on the effects of confronting child soldiers on troops of the industrial democracies who participate in various kinds of PSOs (peace-support operations). Given the centrality of psychology or psychiatry in regard to the study of such issues, I explicitly formulate my argument to complement their disciplinary perspective.

Let me outline my argument in short. My main contention is that in order to understand the place of child soldiers as the opposing force we need to take into account three factors: the 'folk' or 'lay' model of soldiering that soldiers of the industrial democracies use to make sense of their actions; what have become global assumptions and images of children; and the activities of a host of organizations and movements that cultivate the imagery of child soldiers. Concretely, young fighters – and especially children as opposed to adolescents – present a cultural anomaly since they do not fit the interpretive frames or cognitive schemas of combat of troops. Culturally speaking, not only are they not "proper" military enemies but confronting them is experienced as an abnormal situation since they contravene assumptions and deeply held beliefs about children as innocent and vulnerable.

This situation is intensified by the images of child soldiers propagated by a loose coalition of media representatives, policy and decision-makers, (mainly psychological) researchers, security experts, human rights advocates and humanitarian activists. This diverse alliance tends to portray children in war as being at risk with child soldiers being the very personification of hazards posed by armed conflict and social disorder. These images, in turn, resonate with the soldiers "on the ground" that sometimes face child soldiers. This coalition, moreover, is part of the global surveillance of military forces deployed around the world and is now a prime factor making the armed forces of the industrial democracies constantly open to external scrutiny and linking their missions to the process by which contemporary conflicts are judged on television screens and in newspaper columns. The combination of the stresses of armed combat, a posting outside of one's country, the anomaly of child soldiers, the emotional resonance related to confronting them, and the added pressures of global surveillance of military missions may lead to psychological problems that some soldiers express as a result of this situation.

A note on sources. This research is based on my own research into the Israeli military and peace-keeping forces (Ben-Ari 1998; Ben-Ari, Michael and Kellen Manuscript), my work on childhood (Ben-Ari 1997), and on a careful reading of secondary literature based in a variety of disciplines.

4.2 UNDERSTANDING CHILD SOLDIERS: CULTURE AND AGENCY

Let me begin, following Boyden's (2006) seminal work, with a few observations about child soldiers from an anthropological point of view. Our understanding of child soldiers is marked by a rather particular disciplinary viewpoint that has been globalized over the past half a century or so. To put it simply, but not incorrectly, most of the literature on young people and the effects of war is based within "medicine, psychiatry, psychology and adheres to a biomedical paradigm" (Boyden and de Berry 2004: xii). The accepted wisdom within this broad coalition of disciplines is that the effects of war are overwhelmingly negative.

[S]ince it is generally thought that child development and wellbeing are based in biological and psychological structures that are fairly uniform across class and culture, children's responses are regarded as more or less the same everywhere. Much of the research also holds that the progression towards adulthood occurs in recognizable stages, early behaviors and experiences causally related to subsequent developmental achievements (Boyden and de Berry 2004: xiii).

The result of this kind of understanding is the assumption that children exposed to stressful war events are prone not only to traumatic reactions in both the shorter and longer term, but also to developmental impairment. I fully agree that given the highly destructive nature of armed conflict and the terrible suffering of children in such wars, it may seem self-evident that the dominant research focus on the psychopathological impact on children is the most appropriate one. But the problem is that such a perspective – that begins with questions **assuming** negative impacts – may miss a broader range of effects on children and adolescents such as the formation and maintenance of moral values, social competencies, and a sense of self-efficacy (Boyden and de Berry 2004: xv).

Take the title of Brett and Sprecht's book *Young Soldiers: Why they Choose to Fight*. As Hart (2006: 7) suggests, it hints at a willingness to accept that under 18-year-olds may join armed groups voluntarily rather than through coercion or abduction. However, their view ultimately proves to be quite different. The authors draw on ideas about adolescence as a “time of vulnerability with the uncertainties and turbulence of physical, mental and emotional development”) derived from the psychologist Erik Erikson to account for their susceptibility to recruitment.” By contrast, Honwana (2001: 128-9) who has done work in Mozambique and Angola states that some of the youngsters interviewed talked of their motivation to join armed conflict as arising out of the sense of security of possessing a gun and being able to defend oneself, an impulse to avenge the deaths of relatives, a sense of ethnic patriotism or ethnic grievance, or “the sheer fun and adventure of wearing military gear and carrying an AK-47.” Indeed, Makinano (2002) also adds that some children encountered in the Philippines admitted that they joined militias for the “thrill and excitement.” And Gibbs (1994; also Dawes and Cairns 1998) cautions that there is another side of Mozambican children and that they are strong as survivors (not victims) often actively growing in difficult situations.

What would an alternative or complementary explanation of child soldiers consist of? From a broad anthropological point of view, I would stress three major points. The first relates to soldiering on the part of youngsters as continuous with local cultural categorizations or definitions. We must be wary of conflating chronological age with generational categories of childhood, adolescences and youth. Indeed outside schools and sometimes work “chronological age is rarely a determinant of social categories and in many societies people do not celebrate their birth date and are not even aware of their age” (Boyden 2006: 4). Vigh (2006) in his study of youths in Guinea-Bissau found that what outsiders such as journalists or members of humanitarian NGOs recognize by the translated word “child” in many cases refers to one's place in the generational scheme of elders and youngsters with some “children” being thirty years old. And Richards (1996: 174) observes that in Sierra Leone, combatants categorized by external observers as child soldiers from all the warring factions tended to share membership in an excluded and educationally disadvantaged youth underclass with no direct relation to their chronological age.

More recent ethnographic accounts of children in war tend to focus less on the process of socialization and more on the ways in which social construction of childhood and war and the social transitions of aging predispose the young towards military action. One dominant theme in these analyses is the idea that the institution of war is not an aberration but somehow reinforces or replicates the ideational and structural forms that prevailed prior to its outbreak (Boyden 2006: 17).

One expression of this form is how recruitment into the military may be appealing to youngsters since it replicates and resonates with initiation rites into adulthood. Thus, as in many places in the world, becoming a soldier is a means for achieving adult status (Arkin and Dobrofsky 1978; Badinter 1992; Ben-Ari 2001; Morgan 1994). In addition, as a line of anthropologists have shown (Hutchinson 1996; Boyden 2006: 17),

within ethno-theories of human development in Africa and elsewhere, the young are sometimes framed as being especially well suited for warfare.

The second point centers on how leaders of armed groups appropriate cultural understandings for their own ends since there is a limit to cultural continuity because some violent episodes are truly inexplicable both to insiders and outsiders. In these cases, “agents in war co-opt social and cultural templates, employing them as rites of military induction, codes of military conduct and the structuring of relations within the military unit” (Boyden 2006: 18). Shafer (2004), in her study of RENAMO combatants in Mozambique explains how the movement’s commanders recognized that the separation from families was emotionally wrenching so they embraced a patriarchal imagery and the mantle of fictive kinship as a means to re-socialize their young foot soldiers. The commanders became fathers and the troops became children and, along with associated incest taboos, these filial ties bestowed new loyalties on the troops and a firm obligation to serve their masters unquestioningly on the battlefield. In such circumstances, one must not pathologize leaders of gangs of child-soldiers and assert that they do not provide any moral guidance. I would suggest that they actually do provide such guidance but it is one centered on survival, images of manhood (and womanhood) and of loyalty and commitment to the fighting group as a family.

The third, and most contested point, involves children as actors. An increasing number of researchers are working from a perspective that conceptualizes young people’s violence in war as the outcome of the dynamic interaction between constraining structural conditions and human agency. In other words, “youthful engagement in war is believed to be the consequence of structurally conditioned, motivated actions of volitional agents” (Boyden 2006: 20). In less abstract terms, children and adolescents are seen as social actors who are in engaged in rational, conscious, intentional action. This kind of view is related to wider perspectives about children in which they are no longer conceived of as cultural dupes, empty vessels or passive recipients of socialization (Fine 1986; Hirschfeld 2002: 615; Waksler 1986). Rather children are seen as actors with at least some power to resist and change the circumstances within which they live through bargaining and coalition building based on their (albeit limited) powers of the weak.

Yet in most portrayals of child soldiers these capacities tend to be ignored. A United Nations (2002: 12) report, for instance, states that in “addition to being forcibly recruited, youth also present themselves for service. It is misleading, however, to consider this voluntary. While young people may appear to choose military service, the choice is not exercised freely. They may be driven by any of several forces, including cultural, social, economic or political pressures.” And Brett (2002: 2) writing about girls as soldiers uses quotation marks in “voluntarily” to describe how they are recruited. So does Singer (2005: 61) when he talks about a “less than ‘voluntary’ recruitment.” And even Honwana (2001: 129) who makes a strong case that in the terrible crises of Africa “parents can view their children joining either armed force – government or rebel – as a form of protecting the children and themselves,” does not see the actions of child soldiers truly voluntary and places child volunteers in quotation marks.

But Vigh (2006: 50) writing about Guinea-Bissau suggests that if we see youngsters mobilized into militias as children we see them as mechanically mastered by their elders rather than as agents of war. Adopting his kind of view entails an engagement with young people as socio-political actors in a manner at odds with the broad thrust of current popular and academic depictions. Indeed, by suggesting that children may be intellectually and morally capable of engaging in political violence, Hart (2006: 8) suggests that we question a basic premise of child-focused humanitarianism, namely that the young in situations of war are to be approached solely as victims. Even if coercion does play an important role in the recruitment of child soldiers, “the question is whether conceptualizing child soldiering solely in terms of adult culpability and adult infractions is adequate to the task of explaining children’s apparent predilection for violence” (Boyden 2006: 8; also Vogler 2006).

Against this background of youngsters taking up arms I move on to the main part of my text.

4.3 THE PROFESSIONAL FOLK MODEL OF MILITARY UNITS IN THE INDUSTRIAL DEMOCRACIES

What is the imagery of war and combat that many, if not most, military professionals in the industrial democracies hold? I argue that despite almost two decades of what have been called the “new wars” (Kaldor 2001), the basic image continues to center on conventional inter-state conflict between soldiers, fought in accordance with the codified laws of war (Munkler 2005: 12). Historically, this model reflects the predominant forms of great-power warfare within modern European civilization (Holsti 1996: 13-4) and is the one enshrined in the UN Charter, in collective defence organizations like NATO, and in definitions of aggression in international law. Indeed, notice how terms used by various commentators originate in an assumption that the diversity of contemporary conflicts is based on their similarity to, or difference from, conventional wars. Spiller (2000: 1) for instance talks about “war and lesser forms of conflict,” and Smith (2000: 65) talks about “lesser operations” (presumably contrasted with “greater operations”). Fastbend (1997) mentions “war and military operations other than war” while Gates (1988) talks of “military operations short of war.” Or, take the idea of “spectrum of conflict” based on the idea of its intensity (high, medium, or low) from which the term LIC (low-intensity conflict) is derived. In fact, the very term “irregular” warfare implies a normal, “regular” war – and assumptions about “regulars” and “irregulars” as fighting adversaries – offering a benchmark against which all other conflicts are almost always measured.

In short, while around the world new kinds of military knowledge is being developed, two elements of continuity are evident. First, many if not all the armed forces still base much of their training, preparation and operation on images of conventional military structures operating in wars that have taken during the second half of the 20th Century. The kind of opponent involved is a peer or near competitor

[and] the defining characteristic of an opponent of this sort of conflict is the possession of conventional forces of a significant size, which could apply to a belligerent in an intra-state conflict. The military tasks involved vary but are largely of a ‘force-on-force’ character, where combat with the opposing forces is a crucial element and the immediate objectives sought are largely military (Benbow 2004: 137).

Along these lines, the guiding assumptions in much imagery of conventional wars center on clearly defined and roughly similar opponents, operation of regular (as opposed to irregular) forces, clear lines of territorial domination, quantifiable progression in war, and unambiguous links between military goals and the means to achieve them. Indeed, notice how much attention is now devoted to training and educating soldiers about the “new” conditions of counter-insurgency and the difference from conventional wars and combat. These efforts are indicative of the continued strength of images of conventional wars.

Second, and perhaps more relevant for our analysis, the idealization of the 20th Century’s open warfare in which many armed forces participated (or prepared for) came to form the basis for what Bacevich (2005: 45) terms “real soldiering.” And it is this kind of soldiering (based on a template of conventional war) that continues to resonate emotionally with most soldiers and officers in terms of participating in “real combat” (Ben-Ari 1998; Ben-Ari 2004) for it still lies at the very core of professional self-images. Such emotional resonance, as a long line of scholars have noted (Arkin and Dubrofsky 1978; Badinter 1992; Gilmore 1990; Morgan 1994; Robben 2006), is related to images of masculinity, to representations in popular culture, and to the expertise of soldiers in the management and effectuation of organized violence. One indirect expression of the power of this imagery, for example, is the difficulties for motivating and allocating prestige to soldiers in peace-related missions. As Burk (1998: 42) dryly observes, “One strains to imagine a movie about the “Blue Helmets” that would rival the “Green Berets.”” Indeed, although there may be differences between militaries in this respect (Winslow 2002: 40; Tomforde 2005; Sion 2006), the template of conventional war (distance from or nearness to “real” combat) continues to resonate emotionally with troops around the world.

These views of “real” soldiering and combat comprise a “folk” model or “lay” theory used by members of the armed forces to interpret and act upon reality. The term “folk” or “lay” refers to the assumptions and images lying at base of common sense military knowledge, the unquestioned knowledge that “everyone knows”; to what Geertz (1983) has termed the “of-courseness” of common sense understandings. These models are of great importance because they are the basic points of reference for “what we are” and “what we are trying to do” through which military reality is constructed. Indeed, the model of soldiering and combat is used as a template by soldiers and officers to do such things as prescribe proper training, describe and analyze concrete units, or diagnose actions undertaken by individuals. This deeply resonant model shapes the behavior of military commanders and soldiers whatever formal military education they have received and shapes their expectations about armed engagements.

In this respect, the way enemies are understood within the model of “real” soldiering is of importance. The major “folk” categorization of enemies – that is, the way soldiers and officers classify different forces they oppose – is based on the threat antagonists pose to oneself, to one’s unit, and to the performance of both. Enemies are usually arranged along a gradation of (decreasing) significance: regular armies, militias, organized guerrilla fighters, various irregulars, knife wielders, Molotov cocktail and stone throwers, tire burners and finally to “just” civilians demonstrating. This categorization of enemies also forms the basis for an informal scale of prestige or stature accorded to an individual or a unit and in society in general. Accordingly, participation in battles in war is more prestigious than participating in armed patrols. Both activities are considered more impressive than policing civilians in an occupation. Underlying this classification is the view that more threatening enemies are somehow more serious. For example, much attention is devoted to understanding the maneuverability, capabilities and innovative potential of opposing forces. At the tactical level, commanders frequently comment about the fact that antagonists operate under what they perceive to be their own conditions of uncertainty and have their own capacities for reacting to a volatile and threatening environment.

It is in this light that perceptions of child soldiers should be understood. While it is true that “an AK-47 fired by a ten year old kills like one fired by a twenty-one year old man,” this kind of statement should be placed in context. From a strictly military point of view, as Meijer (2007) is careful to state, the likelihood of facing children as the opposing force is especially pertinent to urban crowd and riot control. We are told that the inexperience and lack of training of such soldiers leave them particularly exposed (United Nations 2002: 13). From the military point of view this is an advantageous situation because child soldiers appear to be easier to combat. In fact what seems to be the case is that child units are often not cohesive fighting forces and that demonstrative artillery fires (including smoke) and helicopter gunship passes an fires have proven especially effective in shocking and breaking up child soldier forces (Singer 2003: 30).

But the problem of course is that the confrontation with child soldiers is not a strictly military problem.

For professional forces, child soldiers present the essential quandary perhaps even more difficult than the issue of civilian casualties. Children are traditionally considered outside the scope of war. Yet now they are potential threats to soldiers’ lives and missions (Singer 2003: 29).

A major, if unstated assumption at base of the professional fold mode of “real” soldiering is that enemies are somehow “like us” in that they are rational adults with lethal capabilities. In other words, the troops we work with assume that a “proper,” “normal” or “accepted” scene of combat is between two clearly defined, regular forces of “adults.” It is for this reason that children are outside or at the periphery of the usual system that soldiers use for classifying enemies. The problem hence is that child soldiers are an anomalous category for they are both non-threatening and threatening. Singer (2003: 31) warns that “The general public should be aware that the child soldiers armed with AK-47s are just as lethal as are adults.” But for the soldiers facing them this is problematic proposal. As Meijer (2007) citing a Dutch general who commanded forces in the Congo states: “On the one hand the engagement with children provokes the provision of safety and care, as on the other hand child warriors produce a life threat,

as every other opponent.” Child soldiers, in other words, belong to two classification systems and what happens in soldiers’ encounters with them is that some very basic (and highly emotionally charged) categories of order and normality are violated. Using violent means against children then contravenes not only certain codes of human conduct against enemies but touches upon some basic understandings about ourselves as human beings.

4.4 MORAL PANICS AND THE NEW WARS

Our historical circumstances, however, are marked by a rather particular image of children that intensifies and extends the effect of confronting child soldiers. Historically, there are two competing views of childhood in Western societies. Children are seen along the Puritan line of thinking as born sinful with a propensity for evil or they are seen as innocent and vulnerable. For a variety of reasons, it is the second view that has gained power over the past few decades. The notion of “childhood” as we know it stands in contrast to “adulthood” with children seen as people in the process of becoming, rather than being (James 1993). James and Jenks (1996: 318; Jenks 2005) maintain that in modern times in Western societies children are set apart temporally and as different through the calculation of age; they are deemed special in nature and determined by biological and psychological forces; and children are innocent and therefore are vulnerably dependent.

The prime popular model of children in the contemporary world developed out of tools provided by developmental psychology. In this psychology the idea of development – which to us appears commonplace and normal – assumes a path towards a rational, civilized adult as its end-point (Walkerdine 2005: 96-7). More concretely, child development is seen within this model to be a process of socialization that follows a predetermined path composed of several stages that children go through on their way to adulthood. In other words, the governing idea of socialization centers on “childhood as a period in which biological and social forces interact to generate the competent and effective person (individual)” (Boli-Bennett and Meyer 1978: 799). Through a variety of processes this model (and its attendant assumptions) has been globalized (Rogers and Stainton 1992) and in international law, where children’s rights have been institutionalized, “children often appear as presocial and passive recipients of experience who need to be protected up the age of fifteen or eighteen. They need protection, nurturing, and enlightenment, as they are vulnerable, immature, and incapable of assuming responsibilities. Thus they should be excluded from work and other responsibilities, and confined to the protection of home and school.... Children who do not follow this path are considered to be at risk” (Honwana 2001: 134). Innocence, vulnerability and immaturity, in turn, make the link between children and violent acts such as crime particularly problematic for they are iconologically irreconcilable: the child murderer is viewed as and transgressive, anomalous creature, a composite child-adult that deviates from accepted norms of childhood (James and Jenks 1996: 5). It is the same kind of view that underlies how child soldiers are viewed by troops of the industrial democracies.

Yet the complexity does not end here. In an environment pervaded by fears of world disorder, research centers, think tanks, security experts, and researchers in various disciplines linked to policymakers and decision-makers, journalists and the general public have propagated a view of young soldiers as a veritable scourge.

By firmly linking young humans – especially young men – with violence against states, war researchers and commentators have the potential to instill a sense of moral panic as the ‘youth bulge’ in parts of the South is seen to pose a grave threat to local, national, regional and even global security concerns (Boyden 2006: 2).

The concept of moral panic refers to the reaction of social groups to false or (more often) exaggerated perception that some kind of behavior or a group is dangerously deviant and poses a menace to the very basis of social order (Cohen 1972). These reactions are often fueled by media coverage around a social

issue. It is different from mass hysteria in that moral panics are usually expressed as outrage rather than fear. This outrage, in turn, may lead to pressure being placed on leaders like politicians to “do something.” I suggest, following Boyden (2006) is that we are witness to something along the lines of an unintended moral panic in regard to “child soldiers.” Let me provide two sets of examples in the regard. The first set focuses on portrayals of children as the innocent and vulnerable. Even a cursory review of the web-sites devoted to young soldiers reveals the extent to which visual representations in photographs or drawings are designed to evoke images of blamelessness and helplessness. Or, notice the language that Human Rights Watch chooses to use:

Physically vulnerable and easily intimidated, children typically make obedient soldiers. Many are abducted or recruited by force, and often compelled to follow orders under threat of death. Others join armed groups out of desperation. ... Children are uniquely vulnerable to military recruitment because of their emotional and physical immaturity. They are easily manipulated and can be drawn into violence that they are too young to resist or understand... Both girls and boys are used as child soldiers. In case studies in El Salvador, Ethiopia, and Uganda, almost a third of the child soldiers were reported to be girls. Girls may be raped, or in some cases, given to military commanders as “wives” (<http://www.hrw.org/campaigns/crp/index.htm>)

One report for the Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers (2007: 1) talks of child soldiers who “have been robbed of their childhood.” The International Committee of the Red Cross (2003) uses emotionally mobilizing language with such phrases as child soldiers “can be scarred for life, their childhoods shattered,” “Every child has the right to a normal childhood, and to develop as a human being,” “War crime,” and “In the end, child soldiers will suffer deep trauma, which persists long after the fighting has stopped.”

The second set of examples links moral stances to threats. Here the sense of moral panic is heightened by the frequent use of “intemperate language that implies mass calamity, as in a report by The Center for Emerging Threats and Opportunities, which describes the phenomenon of child soldiering as a ‘Post-Cold War epidemic’ (in Boyden 2006: 2). One of the “experts” in the field writing about Iraq pronounces: “Among Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein’s human-rights violations was his policy of recruiting children into Iraq’s armed forces, in clear violation of international law and moral norms” (Singer 2003: 26), and the title to one section in his article is “Hitler Youth/Saddam Lion Cubs” (Singer 2003: 28). Along these lines child soldiers are linked by way of connotation to the Nazi regime.

Notice how all these statements tend to resonate with certain fears cultivated in many of the industrialized democracies. Furedi’s (2002) analyzes the moral panic that occurred in the mid-1990s in Britain when a small number of violent acts by children were portrayed as the very transformation of childhood in a way that revealed society’s anxieties about children. Indeed, “Alongside the ‘child laborer,’ the ‘street child,’ and the ‘child prostitute,’ the figure of the ‘child soldier’ has been deployed as a powerful symbol of morally bankrupt societies” (Hart 2006: 6).

It is clear that the violence of young people in war is troubling to adults not simply because of the terrible suffering it causes but because it is seen to foreordain societal disorder more generally. This perception calls up parallels with adult reactions to childhood criminality in industrialized countries like the UK. But it would be a mistake to exaggerate these parallels since clearly there is a major difference of scale, for while it is very rare for children in Britain to kill, in societies in conflict young boys and girls are sometimes rendered the prime instruments of violence and terror (Boyden 2006: 7).

What marks the attitude of many in the industrial democracies towards these societies in conflict is what may be termed a child-focused humanitarianism nourished by sentiments that has grown powerfully over more than a century. Hart (2006: 6) refers to this development as the ‘project of saving children in which organizations, movement, lobbies and agencies – from the transnational and governmental to the most local – are engaged in the project of saving children as a distinct category of persons under the age of

eighteen. These images are carried –produced, propagated and disseminated – by organized cultural or norm entrepreneurs. The prime example in this respect is the “Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers” (<http://www.child-soldiers.org/>), that (we are told) “unites national, regional and international organizations and Coalitions in Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America and the Middle East. Its Steering Committee members are Amnesty International, Defence for Children International, Human Rights Watch, International Federation Terres des Hommes, International Save the Children Alliance, Jesuit Refugee Service, and the Quaker United Nations Office, Geneva” (Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers 2007).

These human rights organizations and humanitarian movements belong to what may be termed an international civil society, “those networks of activists concerned with human rights, poverty, indigenous rights, emergency aid, ecological justice, gender equity, and other fundamental humanist goals who form non-state networks and interest groups across national boundaries” (Appadurai 2006: 131). These networks work by gathering and circulating information, forcing transparency, putting pressure on specific states, and very often by mobilizing protest through electronic means. Moreover, the human rights regime has become increasingly entrenched “at a global level in international declarations, conventions, and agreements that are negotiated, implemented and monitored by national, international and transnational institutions” (Cowan et al., 2001: 12). What is important in regard to these networks of movements and organizations – Colonomos (2006) calls them moral epistemic communities – is that their reports are carried by the media, reacted to by politicians, studied by academics and sometimes mobilized into popular power. As Merry (2001: 35) explains, over the past fifty years, transnational organizations such as the UN and innumerable non-governmental organizations

have created a new legal order through transnational processes of information gathering, conferences and discussions under the auspices of the UN and regional bodies... Conventions, treaties and implementation systems are created by international teams, then ratified by states which assume responsibility for enforcing them, with some monitoring by a global body. Even though the human rights system lacks the sanctioning power of state law, its expansion and elaboration creates new discursive legal space within the global arena (Merry 2001: 35).

I emphasize the centrality of these coalitions or networks not in order to deny the extremely important role that they are carrying out. Rather, I do so to underscore how they create the images that often frame understandings of child soldiers that then resonate with the experience of soldiers. Ironically, as we shall presently see, the very existence of child soldiers is a central premise used to mobilize and justify military interventions.

4.5 NEW WARS

But the complexity of the situation does not end here for confronting child soldiers and the psychological stress this may entail is related to central characteristics of the “new wars” (Kaldor 2001): those conflicts that often both combine armed struggles with criminal activities and human rights violations. In today’s world, following Smith (2006), conflicts are managed and fought through the media, the internet and the stage of (national and global) public opinion. Today’s conflicts – and most crucially the interventions of industrial democracies – are judged on television screens and in newspaper columns. In today’s world the media is integral to the strategic level of conflict, not the tactical, since the military and political levels must be able to explain the context and produce a convincing narrative to wider publics. This element is heightened by our specific historical context due both to technological innovations allowing instantaneous reporting and the fact that many armed conflicts have become global media events.

This situation is intensified by what Martin Shaw (2005: 75-6) calls ‘global surveillance,’ the growing transparency of contemporary armed forces to external agents such as political leaders, the media (local and global), the judiciary, pressure groups, international non-state institutions such as the Red Cross, Human Rights Watch or Amnesty International, and individual reports transmitted through cellular phones or the

internet (Burk 1998; Dandeker 1998: 34). The expanding transparency of the armed forces has been accompanied, in turn, by the expansion of international law governing military activity (Merry 2001). In addition, since children have special rights under warfare there is an added potential here for various kinds of violations. All these trends imply that almost all of the actions of troops are constantly open to external scrutiny, to monitoring. Thus as any commander of a force participating in a PSO knows, in addition to the usual stresses of such missions, they can go terribly wrong if there are casualties incurred by child soldiers. Singer (2003: 29) seems to hint at this point when he mentions “the public-affairs nightmare that surrounds the use of child soldiers” since killing them may turn them into “heroic martyrs” (Singer 2003: 29).

These developments are all related to emerging international norms that involve what have come to be called “wars of conscience.” Dandeker (1998: 35) suggests that in late modernity accompanying a greater questioning of the legitimacy of unilateral use of military force to resolve international disputes is the increased focus on human rights as an addition to the concept of security. What we are witness to in the last twenty years is the development of new international norms that define what is legitimately accepted by state actors. Certain actors or norm entrepreneurs – domestic and external, state and NGO-based, and often supported by the media – have steadily been pushing to expand the role of humanitarian interventions. These loose coalitions of intellectuals, informed publics, human rights and humanitarian movements, and national and transnational judicial bodies have been producing a global discourse on human rights and the rules and expectations developed within it for the proper initiation and use of force (Colonomos 2006; Ignatieff 1998, 2004; Warren 2000: 228).

As a consequence, human rights now provide the very basis for justifying and legitimizing military intervention. The power of these global norms, refracted through domestic and international pressure, tends to force Western decision-makers to intervene even when they should not because they resonate with assumptions about the responsibility of industrial democracies for conflicts in the Third World and the need to alleviate suffering and poverty among civilians in them. These themes are so ethically and emotionally evocative for they touch, as Ignatieff (1998) observes, on the bases of Western self-perceptions as good, responsible, moral beings. Indeed, go back to the very rhetoric used in regard to the project of ‘saving the children’ and especially child soldiers. As I demonstrated, it is designed to appeal to a combination of moral sensibilities, emotionally charged assumptions about children, and a sense that “something must be done.”

As a consequence, as Chandler (2001) and Reiff (2002: 243-6) contend, the integration of human rights into humanitarian work has led to the emergence of a militarized humanitarianism. Thus the “new humanitarianism” has become not only much more explicitly politically involved and committed but has also emerged as a driver for intervention in various places around the world (Minear and Weiss 1995). Perhaps one unintended consequence of this situation has been the appearance of a set of mobilizing slogans for new missions as in the calls for Human Security (European Union 2004) or indeed “humanitarian interventions” or “peace-building” (Mychajlyszyn 2000). It is in this light that children at war in general, and child soldiers in particular, form mobilizing mottos that often are part of the justification for humanitarian interventions. Indeed, it may well be that “child soldiering” has become one of the iconic images of current world disorder. It is iconic in the sense of representing in dense form many of the perceived problems of conflict in the contemporary world.

4.6 QUESTIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

My aim in this chapter has been to contextualize the notion of child soldiers rather than treat it as an unproblematic category of young fighters. I have argued that at the local level of armed conflicts confronting child soldiers entails an encounter between the emotionally charged professional ‘folk’ model of “real soldiering” that troops of the industrial democracies have and global images of children as innocent and vulnerable. The combination of threatening youngsters and assumptions about their

inexperience and immaturity creates a cultural anomaly that poses a set of problems for the soldiers who confront them. I then contended that this situation is aggravated by the actions of a loose coalition of the media, leaders, experts and campaigners for human rights and humanitarian causes. These networks represent child soldiers as embodying the threats and dangers posed by armed conflict and social disorder and the images and representations they produced then reverberate with the experiences of troops in various PSOs. Finally, I linked my argument to the emergence of a regime of global surveillance of the armed forces and the advent of a new humanitarian militarism that bear directly on issues of child soldiers.

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Chapter 5 – THE PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING OF PROFESSIONAL ARMED FORCES PERSONNEL FACING CHILD SOLDIERS: A LITERATURE REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

This chapter represents the literature review task on the topic of ‘Psychological well-being of professional armed forces personnel facing child soldiers. This task has been carried out under the ‘Preparing People for Operations’ contract let to the Haldane–Spearman Consortium, led by QinetiQ. The aim of the task was to review all current literature relating to the psychological impact of fighting child soldiers on professional armed forces and to report on the findings. The primary aim of the exercise was to identify where material existed that could be used by MoD to address issues concerning child soldiers. An additional aim was to assist MoD in identifying further areas of research to enable it to develop training material for pre-deployment and inform patient treatment post deployment with regards to the issue of engagement of child soldiers. A final aim was to identify potential attendees for a conference that MoD as part of a NATO working group intends to hold. To ensure that all potential sources of data were contacted and reviewed, HVR drew up a list of categories to which sources were placed. This list included military institutions, academic institutions, libraries, Government & Non-Government Organisations, as well as targeted searches on the internet and media publications/radio programmes. The literature search has uncovered very little data relating specifically to the psychological impact of child soldiers on armed forces personnel. This in itself is an important finding, showing a lack of knowledge in this field and thus highlighting the level of research that MoD will have to carry out to support its own forces. The report has therefore focused on defining child soldiers, and describing the context in which they operate and the problems they pose. The data have been presented thematically, drawing out key findings and learning points for armed forces personnel. The findings highlight that the issues that need to be addressed encompass across many different areas of responsibility, including legal guidelines, cultural awareness (both of our own and of the host nation’s culture) as well as military doctrine and tactics. Public perception and media reporting also seem to impact upon how a soldier deals with any child soldier engagement, enforcing our own cultural framework (western values and morals for example) onto a situation in which it may not be applicable.

The recommendations of this chapter seek to address the apparent ‘black hole’ of knowledge relating to the support of soldiers deployed in areas where child soldiers operate. They outline a comprehensive approach to supporting the armed forces personnel at all levels and at all stages of their operational life. Such a comprehensive approach needs to be prioritised and this ought to be validated through discussions with personnel with first-hand experience of engaging with child soldiers, thereby ensuring that any work undertaken has face validity and is of operational value.

5.1 INTRODUCTION

5.1.1 Background

A proposal for a Scoping Study to consider Psychological Wellbeing of Professional Armed Forces Personnel Facing Child Soldiers was developed by Wing Commander S Kilbey, SO1 Military Medicine, DMSD, in consultation with Group Captain F McManus, Defence Consultant in Psychiatry and Dr J Hacker Hughes, Senior lecturer in Military Psychology, Academic Centre for Defence Mental Health (ACDMH). This study was endorsed by the Surgeon General and his Research Strategy Group on 25th September 2005 [1]. Following support from the Output 2 Owners in early 2006, it was agreed with the Research Acquisition Organisation (RAO) that a collaborative project involving the authors of the proposal and the Haldane-Spearman Consortium (H-SC) would be undertaken. On 8th August 2006 HVR was tasked with the production of a Literature Review to identify and integrate existing knowledge concerning the effects of exposure to child combatants on the professional soldier. It was intended that the review would build upon the proposal and be steered by a stakeholder group comprising of the authors of the proposal and representatives from the Kings Centre for Military Health Research.

5.1.2 Aims

The main aim of the report was to produce a comprehensive record and review of literature material available, to help make an assessment of the possible psychological impact of child soldiers on professional military personnel.

The secondary aim was to produce a report that might influence any future tool that could be conceived to educate and train troops due to be deployed in areas where the deployment of child soldiers is known to take place.

A tertiary aim was to identify potential areas for further investigation.

5.1.3 Methodology

An initial meeting with the stakeholders took place on 19th July 2006 at ACDMH. The meeting afforded all parties the opportunity to meet in person and to discuss the details of the requirement. Resources were pooled and an agreement made on how to proceed.

Following the meeting a 'brainstorm' session was initiated at HVR offices. The session proved valuable in identifying research areas that would need to be covered and institutions that HVR needed to contact. Potential sources were sub-divided into the following headings; Non Government Organisations (NGO), Military, Government Departments, Academia, International Organisations, Media and Miscellaneous.

HVR began a search for relevant articles on the World Wide Web. Utilising bibliographies and references from initial searches, HVR built up a picture of institutions and authors working in this field. Contact was made with those available and the search expanded.

To aid the search HVR created a search matrix essential for effective and efficient research. Noted within the matrix are article titles, authors, dates, links and summaries. The matrix allows HVR to monitor searches and create a source record of all literature and institutions investigated.

Visits and enquiries were made to the following establishments:

- The Library at the Imperial War Museum;
- King's College Institute of Psychiatry;

- The British Library;
- The Defence Academy, Shrivenham and Cranfield University;
- Westminster Library Newspaper Archive;
- Surrey University;
- Liddell-Hart Library, Kings College London; and
- The National Archives, Kew.

Meetings between HVR and the stakeholders were conducted periodically and reports were presented highlighting progress and work still to complete.

Findings that were deemed relevant to the issue in hand were recorded in the report thematically. It was felt that this was the best approach in presenting the information. Details of the overall structure of the report can be found in the following section.

5.1.4 Structure of the Report

A brief background summary on the issue of child soldiers has been provided at Section 5.2. This is designed to give the reader a general world view of the child soldier.

Section 5.3 draws the reader's attention to the themes which HVR has encountered when conducting its literature review. Author's opinions and perspectives are investigated and at the end of each theme key points are summarised.

Section 5.4 collects all the key observations found in the report. More general author recommendations can be found at Appendix 1. Section 5.4 also lists all questions and thoughts which have arisen from reviewing the findings. Section 5.5 lists HVR suggestions and possible future recommendations.

Appendix 2 contains a comprehensive bibliography that, when used with the Source Matrix, should provide a complete record of HVRs investigatory process.

5.2 THE CHILD SOLDIER ISSUE – BACKGROUND

Warfare has changed dramatically over the last 30 years. It now affects the civilian population on a much wider scale than ever before. In today's conflicts it is the civilians who may be the targeted, either deliberately or by accident civilians may be active participants either willingly or otherwise.

Children are not immune to this change in tactics, in fact it seems in many ways they are integral to it. The targeting of child civilians and recruitment of them into armed parties has become a widespread trend in modern war.

P.W Singer, a Senior Fellow of Foreign Policy Studies at the Brookings Institution, writes; "by the turn of the 21st century, child soldiers had served in significant numbers on every continent of the globe except Antarctica. They have become integral parts of both organised military units and non-military, they serve as combatants in a variety of roles: infantry shock troops, raiders, sentries...in short the participation of children in armed conflict is now global in scope and massive in number." [2]

NGOs around the world are engaged in exercises to halt the proliferation of child soldiers. However statistics seem to suggest that it is an uphill struggle with more and more children being recruited into armies and militia. It is estimated that currently there are some 300,000 children under 18 serving as

combatants, fighting in almost 75 percent of the world's conflicts. This figure is quoted consistently across a number of sources.¹

Current British Military Doctrine makes no mention of child combatants and thus seems to suggest that British forces have no official policies on dealing with child soldiers, nor do they dedicate any specific training to the subject. This would seem a doctrinal gap when we remember British peacekeeping forces have on many occasions been deployed in regions where child soldiers are utilised (Kosovo, Bosnia, Sierra Leone, and Congo, among many).

It should be noted that currently, HVR has found very little evidence to suggest that other countries have any dedicated policies or training when facing child soldiers.

It is important to recognise the differences that occur when using the term 'child soldier or 'child combatant'. In the eyes of international law a child soldier is anyone under the age of 18. Our focus in this report is on 'soldiers' under 18, however it must be noted that they are not regarded as professionally trained soldiers in the western sense. It is the child soldier recruited by insurgent groups and rebel forces that have been identified as a key threat to our armed forces and their ability to perform their mission (generally peacekeeping or peace enforcement) effectively.

Current and future UK armed forces' deployments in the peacekeeping role may be affected by child soldiers in the future, given the link between unstable regions and the recruitment of child soldiers. Therefore it would be prudent to investigate the implications for our armed forces that may become involved in such areas.

5.3 THEMES

The aim of this section is to highlight common themes that have arisen from the literature reviewed. HVR has learnt that there are many aspects to the problem of child soldiers, all of which have the possibility of affecting professional military personnel and their mental state, both in the battlefield and post conflict. However, a better understanding of the problem along with updated and improved training for peacekeepers may help to lessen the impact considerably.

5.3.1 Understanding the Context of Child Soldiers

While it has traditionally been accepted that the role of child and soldier are mutually exclusive the twentieth century witnessed several conflicts in which children were active participants, a phenomenon that has shown no sign of abating in recent years. This development undermines legislation enacted by the international community to protect children from armed conflict. The Additional Protocol I and Protocol II to the Geneva Conventions adopted in 1977 stated that children under the age of 15 "shall neither be recruited in the armed forces or groups nor allowed to take part in hostilities" while the 2002 Optional Protocol to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child decreed that it's State Parties "shall take all feasible measures to ensure that persons below the age of 18 do not take a direct part in hostilities". It is now accepted that the term 'child soldier' refers to those under eighteen engaged in deadly violence, serving in government militaries, paramilitaries, militias and armed opposition groups.

In many ways, the prolific increase in the number of children serving as combatants underlies larger changes within modern warfare, especially in relation to the location of warfare. The traditional battlefield no longer exists as wars are increasingly fought in urban areas where civilians cannot be separated from the conflict, and differentiating legitimate military targets from civilians becomes problematic. While in the First World War civilian casualties were fewer than 10 percent of the total, today the overwhelming

¹ Research originally conducted by Quaker UN Offices Geneva and first published in 1998. See Section 5.3.3 for 'Proliferation'.

majority of those killed in conflicts are civilians rather than soldiers. Civilians are unavoidably caught in the line of fire, and, as a consequence, the immunity traditionally extended to the old, the infirm, women and children can no longer be guaranteed. In addition the introduction of 'child portable' weapons, with the widespread availability of inexpensive small arms and light weapons, which are responsible for 80-90% of modern war casualties, has resulted in child soldiers posing a tangible security threat. As such reports of Western militaries fighting children are becoming increasingly common. This represents a dilemma for professional soldiers and policy makers.

The international community's response to child soldiers has become increasingly fervent in recent years mainly due to the attention paid to the crisis by humanitarian organisations. The publication in 1996 of Graca Machel's report for the UN [3] on the impact of armed conflict on children proved fundamental in garnering the attention of charities such as Save the Children, The Red Cross and UNICEF, all of which have published reports on the crisis in recent years. It is important to recognise that NGOs are primarily focused upon disarming and demobilising child soldiers, and that the literature they provide reflects this agenda.

Key Points

- Modern warfare directly affects civilians.
- The changing face of modern warfare is linked with the rising use of child soldiers on the battlefield.
- Children form a key factor in war, as civilians or soldiers.
- The widespread availability of light weapons has resulted in it becoming easier for child soldiers to pose a security threat.
- NGO-produced literature focuses on prevention, demobilising and disarming of child soldiers but not on their effect on peacekeeping forces.

5.3.2 The History of Child Soldiers

The articles considered in this section seek to place the child soldier issue in historical context as well as looking at factors encouraging the modern growth of child soldiers. By looking at the proliferation of child-portable weapons, the growth of suicide bombing, and the increasing regularity of urban warfare it is possible to establish why child soldiers no longer represent a marginal problem, as well as understanding the threat they represent to professional soldiers.

While the use of children as soldiers is not a modern phenomenon the exponential increase in the number of children employed as combatants certainly is. Although armies occasionally employed children as porters, cooks and musicians the active recruitment of child soldiers represents a clear break with tradition. The Battle of Berlin at the end of World War Two saw allied troops facing the Hitler Youth, however it was hardly commonplace, whereas recent conflicts in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Sierra Leone have witnessed the deliberate recruitment of children on a much wider scale. The Vietnam War saw the birth of the modern child soldier when local children targeted US troops using grenades, pipe bombs, and concealed explosives. However, in today's conflicts their role has seen a significant expansion. Children operate as messengers, spies, suicide bombers, and guards, constituting a fundamental aspect of armed forces capabilities, eroding the perception of children as innocent victims of war and illegitimate targets of violence. Professional soldiers will increasingly find themselves facing child soldiers, requiring them to view children as security threats.

In 'Children at War' [4] PW Singer focuses on the historical origins of Child Soldiers, citing examples of the SS and the Vietcong using children as guerrillas or suicide bombers. In his Brookings publication

‘Facing Saddam’s Child Soldiers’ [5] (written prior to the start of the second Gulf War) he makes the observation that many child soldiers were created in Iraq as a result of Saddam Hussein’s regime. State-sponsored programmes for training children as soldiers existed in one form or another since the 1970s, but after the nation’s defeat in Gulf War I the instruction of children intensified as Saddam’s hold on power slipped. Military-style boot camps organised by the regime enrolled boys as young as 10 on three week-long courses to familiarise recruits with basic drills, the use of small arms, and indoctrination of Ba’athist political ideas: they were known as ‘Ashbal’ Saddam or Saddam’s Lion Cubs.

David M. Rosen, in ‘Armies of the Young: Child Soldiers in War and Terrorism’ [6], cites examples even further back, describing the US Civil War as “a war fought by boys” Rosen criticises any attempt to write the child soldier phenomenon out of history and blames NGOs and humanitarian groups for creating the impression that child soldiery is a modern practice. Rosen states that the contemporary attack on child soldiery cannot hide the fact that as early as the nineteenth century the British military systematically recruited children into its ranks.

In ‘Citizen Soldiers’ [7] Stephen Ambrose provides primary source material of American soldier’s experiences facing child soldiers in World War II. One quote in particular gives us the perspective of a trooper in G Company of the 101st Airborne:

“Wouldn’t it be a hell of a thing to go through all this and then check out so close to the end? The thought of being killed by some fanatical thirteen-year-old scares the hell out of me. After coming this far I don’t want to die now.”

The Senior Officer of the company, Major John Cochran, displays anger towards a captured child soldier and suggests he might well have killed the child due to grief over losing a fellow soldier:

“He said, ‘Don’t!’ Then he took that crying child away. The Chaplain had intervened not only to save a life but to prevent me from committing a murder. Had it not been for the Chaplain, I would have.”

If we theorise that such attitudes were common then it can be assumed that, amongst some American soldiers, little regard was shown of the fact that at this late stage in the war they were fighting children, only that these children, as with adult adversaries, were armed, dangerous and a threat to their survival.

Key Points

- Child soldiers should not be regarded as a modern phenomenon. However their use has increased as a result of the nature of modern war, which is often being fought using guerrilla tactics.
- Is it possible that troops currently fighting against child combatants in the Gulf are displaying similar attitudes to those who fought the Hitler Youth in the closing stages of World War II? See ‘Dusty Warrior’ evidence in Section 5.3.4.

5.3.3 The Proliferation of Child Soldiers

As modern warfare increasingly disregards the ‘laws of the innocents’ the number of children directly involved in armed conflicts has increased exponentially. This development has resulted in children being cast as both the victims and perpetrators of war crimes, casting doubt over how children in war zones should be regarded by professional militaries. In the last decade of warfare two million children have been killed, while it is suggested that 23% of the armed organisations in the world deploy children aged 15 and under in active combat roles. Subsequently in recent years the number of conflicts in which professional soldiers have encountered child soldiers has expanded due to the dramatic increase in the number of children enlisted as combatants in addition to the regions to which armies are deployed. The use of

professional soldiers as peacekeepers has exposed the extent of the child soldier crisis. UN peacekeeping missions to Somalia, Sierra Leone, and Kosovo witnessed professional militaries actively engaged with child soldiers, an occurrence that in some cases risks the loss of local support for the peacekeepers.

Research by the Quaker UN Offices Geneva and Radda Barmen published in 1998 suggested that up to 300,000 children, both girls and boys, under the age of 18 were participating in armed conflicts worldwide, a figure that has remained static. While the number of child soldiers may have actually decreased in recent years due to an increase in the number of countries signing the Optional Protocol, the exact numbers are constantly fluctuating in response to the specific conditions of individual conflict zones. As such while a cease fire in Sierra Leone may result in the decommission of hundreds of child soldiers nationally renewed hostilities in the Democratic Republic of the Congo will result in a renewed recruitment drive in the region.

The 2004 Global Report [8] from The Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers revealed the true extent of the crisis, illustrating that between 2001 and 2004 the governments of Burundi, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Cote d'Ivoire, Guinea, Liberia, Myanmar, Rwanda, Sudan, Uganda, and the United States of America all employed child soldiers. It is clearly misguided to view child soldiers as a marginal threat or purely a third world phenomenon. Of the European nations Austria, France, Germany, Hungary, the Netherlands and Italy all allow voluntary recruitment at 17, while the United Kingdom accepts recruits from the age of 16. While the use of children by professional armed forces does concern humanitarian groups it is the forced recruitment of children which poses the more pressing problems. In 2004 there were an estimated 100,000 child soldiers in Africa, of which it is estimated 20,000 were abducted by the Lord's Resistance Army in Uganda. In some cases forcibly recruited children can be as young as 8 years old, and it is these children who encompass what the public perceive to be a child soldier.

Currently British soldiers are serving in the Gulf, Afghanistan, Bosnia, Kosovo, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Ethiopia, and Northern Ireland, all regions where child soldiers are known to operate. While the majority of child soldiers are associated with non state groups in isolated cases government organisations establish state sponsored schemes for training child combatants. A notable case is that of 'Saddam's Lion Cubs.' During Gulf War Two American troops engaged with children on a regular basis, resulting in the US capturing 107 Iraqi juveniles considered high risk security threats. In a similar vein in 2006 Hamas established summer camps for future martyrs indicating that the use of children as combatants in the Middle East is not a limited phenomenon. Indeed when it transpired that the first US service man lost in Afghanistan was killed by a 14 year old boy the news elicited shock, as the war continued it transpired to be a far from isolated incident. Professional soldiers need to be prepared to encounter child soldiers, and recognise the potential security threat posed by children.

Key Points

- Peacekeepers are increasingly exposed to child soldiers.
- It can be argued that the child soldier phenomenon is not limited to the poorer states. Child soldiers also exist in the West in both the militaries of the UK and US.
- Professional Soldiers and peacekeepers need to be prepared to face child soldiers as a security threat and be appropriately equipped to deal with them.

5.3.4 Western Concepts of 'Childhood'

It is important to remember the perspective from which we approach the subject of child soldiers. In the West children are largely viewed as attaining full adulthood at the age of 18. However, in the majority of nations that deploy child soldiers, the concepts of childhood and age at which they are considered adults can be very different from those found in the West.

If this is the case then to what extent can Western concepts of childhood be applied in non-Western culture? To what extent are Western concepts valid in other cultures?

Singer, in ‘Western Militaries Confront Child Soldiers Threat’ [9] remarks that children form an integral part of insurgent capabilities, and professional troops need to accept that in Iraq the use of children as soldiers or suicide bombers is encouraged rather than condoned. This different treatment of children witnessed between diverging cultures needs to be understood by professional soldiers in order to contextualise their treatment of armed children. While in the west the death of a child at the hands of a soldier would never be acceptable, in regions of the Middle East the social acceptance of children as soldiers means that professional soldiers will need to re-evaluate their preconceived beliefs of children in order to defend themselves.

‘The Problem of Child Soldiers’ [10], found in the International Review of Education 2002, makes the important point that the perception of adulthood differs between cultures, so while most societies view child soldiers as all people under the age of eighteen who are recruited into armed forces, local consensus may place the transition into adulthood at 14, legitimising the practice of enlisting youths. Interestingly while the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child sets an age limit for recruitment at 18, the continent has approximately 120,000 child soldiers, demonstrating that without decisive action the crisis will not be resolved.

In *Dusty Warriors* [11], Richard Holmes offers up first hand UK personnel experiences of being attacked by children in Iraq and how difficult it seems to be for Western officers to accept children as protagonists in an attack. Second Lieutenant Deane explains what happened during Operation Pimlico:

“The petrol bomb smashed on the front of the turret and the flaming petrol engulfed Sgt Llewellyn in the commander’s turret.”

Sgt Chris Broome, who was also present, sums up his thoughts: “Sgt Andrew Llewellyn is a good friend of mine...on the day he got petrol-bombed, this attack was carried out by children. A child you would think could do no damage to someone as robust as Lewy. But when petrol is set alight all over your body, it doesn’t matter how old or big the person who threw it is.”

Major James Cooke is frank in his admission of the incident’s impact on his company: “We had been stoned by kids before, seen the gunmen using women and children as human shields...but this was the first time someone had sent a child to physically attack us. It was extremely difficult for me to calm myself and the company down, particularly as one or two of the younger lads were understandably traumatized by the experience. My initial reaction was to go back in and hand out some retribution, but that would have countermanded our earlier success.”

This incident seems to have shifted the attitude of the entire company as they begin to see all those around them as potential enemies. This attitude is highlighted in the following passage; ‘There was a wider feeling in C Company that the young boy who threw the petrol bomb is responsible for the deaths of many of his countrymen, as the company are no longer reticent to make use of their weapons whenever they feel it necessary to protect themselves.’

Key Points

- To what extent can Western Concepts of childhood be applied in non-Western culture?
- To what extent are Western concepts valid in other cultures?
- The culture in which child soldiers have been indoctrinated must not be ignored or marginalised.
- Evidence suggests it is difficult for Western professionals to accept children as a modern battlefield feature.

5.3.5 The Unique Problem of the Child Soldier

Children as soldiers should be considered a unique issue, Child soldiers tend to act and react very differently in comparison with adults. As such they present unique problems for the professional soldier and international community.

In 'Western Militaries Confront Child Soldiers Threat' Singer highlights some of the reasons why children are so different in comparison with their adult soldier counterparts. In order to indoctrinate them, child soldiers' leaders exploit the child's natural gullibility and vulnerability. Unlike adults children rarely need bribes in order to remain loyal to their leaders, while in the case of those orphaned the children may come to see their fellow soldiers as an extended family, for which they are willing to sacrifice themselves. Singer makes it clear that where children are involved conflicts tend to be protracted with extensive casualties. Children are effective combatants, who take risks that professional soldiers (or adults for that matter), avoid. In addition a lack of regard for rules of engagement results in massive violations of the laws of war with the routine killing and mutilation of civilians. The effect upon professional soldiers of engaging with an enemy who fail, to comply with convention, can only be imagined. Professional soldiers are taught to uphold the laws of war, with severe consequences for those who fail to do so. In comparison child soldiers kill prisoners, their own wounded, and civilians. When facing child soldiers, professional armies will doubtless feel empathy for their opponent yet this empathy must not cloud judgement.

In 'Caution Children at War' [12], Singer is fully aware that western militaries overlook the threat posed to professional soldiers, in terms of both physical and mental impairment. As it becomes increasingly apparent that many child soldiers are experienced fighters, who by the age of 18 may have been serving for ten years, it is necessary for professional soldiers to alter their perceptions of 'children' for their own safety. The article's consideration of the implications of child soldiers examines the numerous changes in conflict dynamics that have implications for professional militaries, Singer's focus being upon American forces.

At a time when the US is encountering problems with the recruitment and retention of troops children multiply the fighting numbers of armed organisations cheaply and quickly. As a result groups which would not traditionally pose a military threat are now capable of creating civil unrest. This development has also resulted in the devaluation of ideologically grounded warfare. Groups using children may have few objectives, and no grass roots support, yet the sheer volume of their troops means that they have an almost inexhaustible resource. This creates a problem for professional troops who cannot be comforted in the knowledge that they are fighting for a righteous cause as in World War Two when the actions of allied troops fighting the Hitler Youth were excused due to the wider ramifications of a victory. The knowledge that the children they are fighting have little or no idea of what they are fighting for could have profound implications for professional soldiers, as well as extending fighting indefinitely as a lack of direction means there is little room for negotiation. On the other extreme marginalised groups whose objectives do not appeal to adults can suddenly become a powerful fighting force. Singer refers to the LRA in Uganda, whose followers fight to restore respect for the Bible's Ten Commandments, yet encourages torture, rape, and mass killing, and prohibits the use of bicycles, but field a force of 12,000.

Singer's research also demonstrates that when children are involved conflicts are more violent and unpredictable, undermining the conventions of war on a massive scale. To maintain a state of fear, and desensitise the recruits, leaders of child soldiers encourage killing, rape and torture, making such atrocities a common occurrence. For professional armies, guided by rules of engagement and international conventions, to be facing an enemy who openly kill prisoners of war, and uses children as human shields, represents an unprecedented break with conventional warfare.

In an article published by Singer in 2004 (Talk is Cheap: Getting Serious about preventing Child Soldiers [13]), the author progresses to a discussion of the moral factors governing military action guidelines

challenged by the presence of children as active combatants. The use of child soldiers has become so widespread in certain nations that their use is almost justified, as the basic ethical injunctions against using child in active combat roles have collapsed. Singer worries that if the crisis is not resolved quickly the use of child soldiers will become an accepted, or at least a familiar image, which will no longer resonate with the strategists who should be focused upon eradicating their use. The continued use of children is not simply a moral issue, but a security problem, as the use of child soldiers facilitates the growth of organisations whose ideological and political mandate would fail to attract the support of adult combatants.

Major Phil Ashby's experiences with Child Soldiers in Makeni [14], Sierra Leone, seem to corroborate some of these unique aspects child combatants. In 'Child combatants; a soldier's perspective' Ashby claims that he found interaction with child soldiers problematic, both morally and practically. Though he was aware that they were children and could not be blamed for their wrongdoings, their very ignorance of normal morality made them "particularly dangerous".

Ashby draws attention to the fact that negotiations with rebels (already hazardous), were made even more difficult when dealing with the unpredictable nature of a child soldier. Child soldiers he encountered had no understanding of life and death and certainly no concepts of neutrality of the UN. Whereas professional soldiers adhere and uphold laws of war children often disregard or are untrained in the rules.

In June 2003 an article featured in the Washington Post Foreign Service [15] that offers an insight into the mind of both an African child soldier and Canadian peacekeepers deployed in Bunia, Congo. 'Eric said he wasn't scared. At 12 years old, he is an experienced soldier' "I am not afraid", I am a soldier," he said. "If today I kill someone, I am okay."

This evidence seems to back claims that child soldiers are fundamentally different in comparison to their adult counterparts showing little fear or remorse for their actions. Of course this evidence needs to be balanced with the possibility that this child soldier could have been feigning bravado in the face of Western journalists.

The article then focuses on the peacekeepers viewpoint. 'And as if the spectre of child soldiers doing battle with one another weren't chilling enough, their prevalence here has been haunting the foreign troops who have come to Congo to stop the killing but find themselves wondering what they will do if they find themselves facing armed foes as young as 7.'

Maj. Rob Stein who had been dispatched to the region for only a week at the time of this article questions his position: "Do you shoot a child that looks like he could be your son, even if it looks like they are going to shoot you?"

Colonel Gerard Dubois, spokesman for the multinational peace force, acknowledged that the issue is a problem and states that minimal force will be used: "Of course if you are in Europe or the USA, you don't speak about child soldiers. So each case, each event is different. Our soldiers are trained to keep calm when faced with problems. The minimum level of violence is our main goal."

However Dubois seems aware that in some circumstances force can only be met with equal force:

"If the answer we get is aggression, then we are a force and we have to respond with force."

The Washington Post article is also important because it claims that peacekeepers have tried employing less lethal methods of subduing child soldiers in other countries.

'During operations in Sierra Leone and other African conflicts that included child soldiers, peacekeepers have tried a variety of techniques to subdue them without killing them, including shooting them in the leg, punching them or simply trying to persuade them to put down their weapons by talking to them like a parent.'

No evidence has been forthcoming as to whether these methods have been successful but it is likely that they have been devised ‘in-field’ rather than officially as approved military methods.

A final point to note it is that these examples usually deal with children in unprofessional armies and rebel forces. It is doubtful whether the same characteristics can be applied to the child soldiers in professional armies who will be trained in both common rules of war and morality.

Key Points

- Child soldiers react very differently from adult soldiers, they must therefore be treated differently.
- Child soldiers may show little or no fear, a disregard for life and for the basic rules/laws of war.
- Child soldiers are readily available to boost the ranks of insurgent and rebel forces, they are low cost and easy to control.
- Difficult negotiations with rebel groups are further complicated when the unpredictable nature of the child soldier is also factored in.
- Professional soldiers are trained to adhere and uphold the basic laws of war. Child soldiers in rebel forces are not. This potentially places the professional at increased risk.
- How does the unpredictable nature of child combatants affect the mind of well-disciplined, well-trained peacekeeper?
- The term ‘child soldier’ is not often used in the West.
- Force needs to be met with force, despite the age of the attackers.
- There are alternatives to lethal force, but how successful are these methods in dealing with the issue?

5.3.6 Recruitment Techniques

Philip Ashby’s eyewitness accounts of recruitment techniques in Sierra Leone seem to be typical of rebel armies desperate to raise their numbers at low cost. Typically when a rebel force occupied a town or village it abducted the children who often became the next generation of combatants. Ashby highlights the ‘downward spiral of violent chaos’ as these abductees were press ganged into the rebel armies, forced to act as cannon fodder and became brutalised; victims becoming the aggressors.

To ensure loyalty often the Revolutionary United Front (RUF), would force recruits to become dependent on drugs and commit atrocities against their community and own family, effectively ostracising them. When these children were orphaned (either literally or practically) the RUF or particular rebel force would become the surrogate family.

The Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers clarifies the importance of understanding the subject of recruitment in ‘Dealing with Child Recruitment by Armed Groups’ [16] pressing the need for information on patterns of recruitment in order to manage effectively the current child soldier issue.

The coalition seems to discourage the idea that child soldier recruitment focuses only upon the exploitation and abduction of children and that tactics for combating child soldiers must be tailor- made to deal with local conditions and practices of recruitment.

David Rosen questions the view that children are viewed as victims due to the fact that there are those children who voluntarily join these forces. More details of this view can be found in Section 3.16 [6].

Evidence from ‘Dusty Warriors’ seems to suggest that it is easier to recruit children into armed groups when they have little other purpose or social responsibility. Major James Coote: ‘The most significant impact will be made in employment and business-creation schemes, which will help the economy, but most importantly it will take the large numbers of 16-25 year-olds off the streets, where the temptation to pick up an Rocket Propelled Grenade (RPG) is all too high.’

Key Points

- The various methods of recruitment range from physical to psychological such as being drugged, abducted, ostracised from home due to forced participation in murder, orphaned, indoctrinated, religious pressure or as a willing volunteer.
- According to NGO thinking knowledge of recruitment issues is key to dealing with child soldiers and stopping their continued use.
- Does knowledge of these forced techniques of recruitment affect the effectiveness with which the professional military soldier can deal with child soldiers?
- Youth who are unemployed or have little social responsibility are easier targets for those doing the recruiting. Lack of a job or focus in their lives may lead to a taking up of arms.
- This issue is directly linked to the following Section 5.3.7 Child Soldiers as Victims.

5.3.7 Child Soldiers as Victims

When we look at the recruitment techniques in the previous chapter, it is natural to think of child soldiers as victims, and in many ways they are. If this is the common perception, to what extent does it affect the psychology of the professional soldier? How will servicemen react if they perceive that the children they are fighting have been forced into the situation and need aid rather than firing upon?

The article ‘Why Now?’ [17] published by the American Federation of Teachers (AFT), highlights some of the factors that drive children into becoming part of armed forces, the majority of which are out of their control. In particular the endemic spread of AIDS is cited for creating a generation of orphaned, vulnerable children. A further factor is the widespread distribution of light weapons such as rifles, grenades, landmines, light machine guns, and light mortars, all of which are man portable and cheap. The fact that in West Africa alone more than two million people were killed by small arms in the last decade demonstrates the capability of such weapons, which when combined with the vast number of child soldiers within the region, poses an obvious security threat.

Singer raises the question of how to distinguish between a child soldier as a threat and as a victim of circumstance. However a child with a gun can kill as effectively as an adult and soldiers will have to reconsider the manner in which they view children in conflict zones for their own safety.

David Rosen counters the view that all child soldiers are victims of circumstance. Rosen believes that NGO and international humanitarian groups have vastly oversimplified the current crisis by casting children as the unwitting victims of war without acknowledging the cultural conditions shaping identity and behaviour. Rosen acknowledges that while many societies promote the peaceful resolution of disputes, there are others that deliberately socialise children to be aggressive. In such instances the use of children as combatants is not surprising. The belief that children are possessed of an innocence and virtue developed during the Middle Ages, yet this period also witnessed the so called children’s crusade, demonstrating that the behaviour of children cannot be standardised according to ideals.

Rosen cites, and attacks, three conceptual pillars of humanitarian narratives; fundamental changes in the nature of warfare in the postcolonial era, the emergence of the small arms trade and the special

vulnerability and innocence of children. Just as the definition of child soldier has elicited confusion, so too has the classification of ‘new’ and ‘old’ in relation to warfare. A simplistic reading reveals ‘old wars’ as those bound by time, space and rules, in that they had a clear start and finish, a self evident ideological cause, a defined battlefield, and observed rules of engagement to which both sides agreed. In contrast a ‘new war’ is formless and aimless, with no clear political objectives, and as such there are no victors, just victims. While this characterisation of modern warfare is often accurate Rosen believes the traditional conflict has been recast, and by mythologizing the past society is less equipped to deal with the child soldier doctrine appropriately. Rosen refers to the hypocrisy surrounding the vilification of modern child soldiery while the use of Jewish children by the Polish resistance has been legitimised due to the ideological objectives of those in charge.

An attempt by NGO and humanitarian groups to depict all child soldiers as vulnerable victims is the third ‘conceptual pillar’ that Rosen criticises. While it is true that many children are abducted or coerced into becoming soldiers there are some who voluntarily conscript, and this raises the question of whether child soldiers should automatically be viewed as victims. Interviews conducted by Paul Richards [18] revealed that many child soldiers choose to “fight with their eyes open and defend their choice”. While Rosen does not condone the use of children as combatants he is arguing that in many cases children are highly effective soldiers, who should be viewed as a real danger. While attempts by NGO and humanitarian groups to demobilise and reintegrate child soldiers are noble, by failing to recognise that not all child soldiers are victims, the effectiveness of such an approach is limited.

Rosen’s book reveals the reality that where child soldiery is concerned the moral dimension is governed by the individual circumstances of the conflict. While few would accuse the Polish Resistance as exploiting the Jewish child combatants, their use demonstrates a time when children saved their own lives by becoming soldiers. The child soldiery debate is not simply a question of morality but one of practicality and survival. Genocide is a global problem, and as long as there is no adult authority available to oppose such brutality in the form of the UN, NATO, or peacekeepers, children will continue to fight. While some have attacked Rosen’s research for supposedly promoting a child’s right to kill [19] the author has presented an argument with serious ramifications for the treatment of child soldiers. To provide an effective programme of change humanitarian organisations would need to consider the full range of racial, cultural, and social factors that inform the use of child soldiers. As David Rosen states, attempting to personify childhood through the arbitrary characteristic of age only seeks to simplify what is a complex problem.

Key Points

- Sometimes the only way for children to save their own lives is to become a soldier.
- Child soldiers are often viewed by humanitarian organisations, and in turn the public, as victims. This is often the case but not always.
- How does one make the distinction between the child soldier as a threat, victim of circumstance, or both? How does this ‘labelling’ affect a soldier’s judgement?
- Have NGOs and humanitarian groups over-simplified the situation by casting children as victims all the time and ignoring cultural factors?
- If the professional serviceman regards child combatants as victims at all times how does this affect his overall psychology?

5.3.8 The Public Image of Child Soldiers

Press reports reviewed during this report seem (on the whole) to portray child soldiers as victims. While this may indeed be the case, detrimental images in the press can demoralise troops already confused about how to deal with the issue of child combatants.

Articles that focus on NGO efforts to demobilise and discourage the use of child soldiers may have a negative effect on a soldier due to be deployed to a region where child soldiery is commonplace. In a recent incident reported in the press in August 2006, a British serviceman convinced he would be forced to fire upon children when deployed to the Gulf, committed suicide [20]. One must question to what extent the image of child soldiers had affected the psychological perception of this individual.

Press coverage that consistently shows children as innocent victims can further undermine soldiers' confidence.

In 'Western Militaries', Singer underscores the public image implications of the child soldier phenomenon. Although children are lethal combatants in the eyes of the public they may be viewed as victims. With public support for the war in Iraq waning images of US troops killing child soldiers could be detrimental, while attacks upon the actions of soldiers prove bad for morale. However the American public cannot be ignorant of the real danger posed by child combatants in the Middle East after it was revealed that the infamous Camp X-Ray detains children as young as 13 in a special facility referred to as Camp Iguana.

Key Points

- Press reports often portray child soldiers as unwitting victims.
- Detrimental images and words can demoralise troops in the field and those due to be deployed.
- Images of Western peacekeepers in action against child combatants can have a negative affect on public opinion.
- The question needs to be asked, does there need to be greater control of the press?
- We must recognize that to some extent the press projects the image of our own culture onto regions where cultures and social norms are in fact very different.

5.3.9 Operation BARRAS

On Friday 26th August 2000 a twelve-man patrol from the British Royal Irish Regiment was captured in Sierra Leone by the 'West Side Boys' a group of rebels comprising mainly child combatants.

The reasons for the patrol's capture varied at first report, from simply getting lost, to headstrong behaviour on the part of the commanding officer Major Alan Marshall.

Peter Singer claims in his 2002 publication 'Children at War' [21] that the soldiers had been surrounded and captured when "their squad commander (Marshall), had been unwilling to fire on children armed with AKs."

The subsequent rescue Operation (BARRAS), spearheaded by the SAS, was launched after the Regiment had been held for 16 days. After a brief 20 minute exchange of fire, the action left at least 25 rebels dead and 18 captured with the loss of one SAS soldier and was viewed largely as a success.

However, if we view Singer's claim that a contributing factor to the capture in the first place was due to the inaction of the Commander, there is a possibility that this apparent unwillingness to open fire ultimately led

to more bloodshed in the rescue exercise. Operation BARRAS demonstrates that professional soldiers must be prepared to use lethal force in order to defend themselves from Child Soldiers, who no longer constitute merely a peripheral crisis.

Singer is also keen to point out that two of the soldiers involved in the ill fated patrol were in fact 'children' themselves, both being seventeen years of age. It should be noted that HVR has been unable to uncover any evidence that supports this claim; however, it highlights a worrying prospect of child soldiers fighting against each other.

Key Points

- Inaction or hesitation when encountering child soldiers may lead to more bloodshed.
- The prospect of child soldier versus child soldier combat. If not now perhaps in the future due to current US and UK recruitment policy.

5.3.10 Child Soldiers: International Law and Training of the Military

HVR's literature investigation seems to suggest there is a lack of appropriate training in place for professional military personnel on the subject of child soldiers. Whether they are based in the UN or NATO forces, those charged with peacekeeping may be lacking significant skills in dealing with child soldiers.

There also seems to be the suggestion that international humanitarian law is lagging behind the changes in the nature of warfare and may need reviewing and adapting.

Jenny Kuper confirms a large portion of this thinking in her publication 'Military Training and Children in Armed Conflict: Law, Policy and Practice' [22].

Kuper's publication is primarily aimed at those involved in the training of national armed forces, military personnel, government representatives, policy makers, and members of non governmental and inter-governmental organisations. Kuper considers the law and policy relevant to the training of officers of national armed forces regarding the treatment of children at the outset, during, and shortly after situations of armed conflicts. She then offers advice on practical training for officers of national armed forces on the treatment of children.

The distinction between the theoretical and practical application of the law is important as Kuper acknowledges that the majority of International Humanitarian law (IHL) was drafted following the Second World War, and therefore did not anticipate the changing context of modern warfare. For example the rise in non-international armed conflicts has raised legal questions concerning the jurisdiction of IHL, as there is uncertainty as to whether non-governmental armed groups are bound by IHL. As such there are concerns over how legal and quasi-legal obligations towards the treatment of children can be encouraged, monitored or enforced.

Incidents where non-international armed conflicts do not conform to earlier IHL models include; soldiers who have been drugged and are not fully aware of their actions, where children as young as 8 are deployed, or where the conflict's aim is the genocidal annihilation of an ethnic group, including its children. In addition there is a lack of clarity about the application of IHL when industrialised countries are involved, and choose to conduct hostilities using computer or nano-technology, and are therefore unsure of the identity of their target, potentially resulting in the death of civilians, and in particular children. However while the characteristics of armed conflict have changed the basic principles of IHL have not, and it is these principles which govern the actions of the professional armed forces.

Kuper strongly believes that all troops must be trained in the basic principles of IHL, emphasising that all protections articulated for civilians and combatants apply equally to children. With professional militaries increasingly deployed against child soldiers, Commanding Officers need to be fully aware of the particular legal problems concerned with the treatment of children. The basic principles concerning children can be found in all the main IHL instruments as well as certain customary law norms. However finding the appropriate balance between military necessity and humanitarian considerations can pose a challenge. Even so, human rights norms apply in all circumstances, and as such soldiers are prohibited from carrying out arbitrary killing, enslavement and torture. The principle guiding the treatment of children is expressed in the 1989 'UN Convention on the Rights of the Child' (CRC), which states that children are entitled to special care and attention. Officers should be trained in the fundamental human rights principles and IHL, which should be observed by all soldiers.

The use of child soldiers is expressly prohibited by national and international law, and as such there exists a conundrum as how prepare professional soldiers for engaging with an enemy proscribed under the conventional standards of warfare. However with professional militaries regularly deployed in regions where child soldiers are known to operate Kuper acknowledges that pre deployment training specifically focused on child soldiers must be offered to troops.

Interestingly, Kuper also draws attention to problems associated with identifying child soldiers, who do not always conform to the image of very small children with very large weapons. In contrast a child of 15 may look significantly older and as such not be recognised as a minor entitled to special protection under international law.

Kuper examines legislation that is applicable in relation to child soldiers in general, child soldiers in professional armed forces and child soldiers in opposing armed forces. The notes on how to treat an enemy made up of child soldiers are of use; reiterating the point that soldiers are trained to act in self defence and should not be expected to adapt their behaviour when facing a child soldier. While the idea of hurting a child may be alien to the social norms ingraining in professional soldiers they will at times be expected to prioritise their mission over the lives of children, action they should be forewarned to expect.

Kuper also details some of the issues that may arise from having to detain children prisoners. The news that the infamous US military prison nicknamed Camp X-Ray was detaining children in a facility known as Camp Iguana sparked concern from humanitarian organisations. However with professional militaries facing child combatants with increased regularity such detentions are inevitable. However the issue of captured child soldiers does raise questions concerning legality. The 1989 CRC stressed that the detention of children should be seen as a last resort, and only enforced for the shortest length of time. However the imprisonment of child soldiers raises questions of jurisdiction, as the children are being detained as captured combatants. Nevertheless, captured child soldiers do still have protection in the eyes of the law, noticeably the right to legal assistance and a speedy trial, the aim of which should be constructive rather than punitive. The death penalty for crimes committed by a juvenile is strictly prohibited, and Kuper believes that forced entry into the armed services should be taken in mitigation when deciding upon sentencing.

It is of little wonder that at times the requirements of international law and the demands placed upon the military are at odds over the appropriate response to child soldiery. As such Kuper feels there is a danger that the law and related policy will be viewed as an obstacle to achieving the central task. There is the suggestion that even when soldiers are trained in the principles of IHL the extreme circumstances they are placed in can render such training useless due to an inability to recall information. While the ICRC believes that fighting ethically in accordance with IHL has a direct bearing upon the success of military operations, the changing face of warfare could mean that perceptions of 'acceptable behaviour' will also need to adapt to safeguard professional soldiers.

Overall ‘Military Training and Children in Armed Conflict: Law, Policy and Practice’ draws attention to the fact that while there is a large body of law relating to the protection of children in armed conflict relatively little is known about how this knowledge is transmitted to soldiers via training. Kuper argues that one of the problems associated with child soldiers is the fact that they “have no vocational identity as professional soldiers and no corresponding sense of warrior’s honour”. As such there is doubt as to whether it is possible to predict a child combatant’s behaviour, raising questions as to the most appropriate form of preparation adult soldiers can be offered for combat with children. Clearly training will need to be adapted to include the question of child soldiers.

The legal protection offered to children in hostile situations is focused on in ‘The problem of Child Soldiers’. The article reviews the legal protection offered to children in hostile situations such as the Four Geneva Conventions (1949), the subsequent Additional Protocols I and II to the Geneva Conventions of 1949 (1977), the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) and the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child (2000). A consideration of these various documents illustrates the difficulty in establishing firm guidelines for classifying child soldiers. Although Additional Protocols to the Geneva Conventions of 1949 (1977) states that all feasible measures should be taken to prohibit children under the age of 15 taking part in hostilities it does not outlaw the practice, and although in the recruitment of young adults between the ages of 15 and 18 priority should be given to the oldest, the convention makes legitimate targets of this age group, making it difficult to find consensus in the definition of child soldier difficult.

It is important to highlight, that during the course of the literature review HVR found only two examples of training being offered to peacekeepers to deal with child soldiers.

The first was from the Swedish Save the Children Fund and features in a document entitled; ‘Training Peacekeepers and Military Forces in Child Rights and Protection’ [23] ‘The paper stresses the importance of training for armed peacekeepers, observers and civilian police on issues relating to children. A large part of the training seems to be regarding the rights of child civilians. Save the Children use theoretical instruction and role-play to instruct troops on the Convention on the Rights of the Child. However, there appears little instruction that could be applied to the issue of child soldiers from a military perspective. Overall, it may prove a valuable document to review before any formal drafting of future military training, or altering of doctrine is made, but in its current state it has limited application.

The second case is a little more obscure. In April 2006 the ISN [24] published an online report with the headline ‘German-led DRC mission sparks controversy.’ [25] The report highlights that the German Bundeswehr Association was against the idea of sending a 1,500-strong German led EU military force to the DRC at the request of the UN. The association specified that if they were sent into the Congo, their rules of engagement would have to be clearly regulated. At the same time, reports of a fresh campaign in the region to recruit child soldiers only added to German officers’ concerns. The spokesman of the Bundeswehr at the time, Wilfried Stolze stated that facing armed children would be a totally new task for German forces and would require specialised training.

Two months later various sources [26] reported that EU troops due to be deployed in the Congo had received new rules in dealing with child soldiers and would be entitled to shoot child soldiers if they were forced to. The commanding officer of the EU force Lieutenant General Karlheinz Viereck, was quoted to have said that the mission’s rules of engagement allowed the soldiers to shoot in self-defence if they found themselves confronted by “a child with a raised weapon.”

In 2003 Germany refused to send soldiers into the DRC as peacekeepers. In 2007 there is still discomfort from certain quarters and one must question to what extent did such disquiet allow for new rules of engagement to be formulated? Between 2003 and 2006 it can be speculated that Germany pushed for a clarification, and (if necessary), adaptation of the rules of engagement to make their task a little less complicated. Though HVR has been unable to clarify exactly what these changes were, this is an important

example of a need for clarification and the concerns the child soldier issue can raise in a professional military force.

Key Points

- IHL lags behind the changes in modern warfare. It is not flexible enough to encompass the threat of child soldiers realistically.
- A distinction should be made between theoretical and practical application of law.
- Uncertainty exists as to whether non-government armed groups are bound by IHL.
- Troops must all be trained in the basic principles of IHL.
- Commanding Officers must be provided with and be fully aware of the particular legal ramifications concerned with the treatment of children.
- Problems exist when deploying professional troops to areas where child soldiers are known to operate. Appropriate pre-deployment training must be offered.
- Identifying child soldiers can be an issue. They do not conform to stereotype.
- The legality of detaining child soldiers is in question and needs to be effectively addressed to avoid complication.
- Law and policy should not be viewed as an obstacle to achieving mission objectives especially where child soldiers are concerned.
- The professional soldier will need reassurance that when engaging child combatants he is performing his duty legally and without fear of reprisal.
- Save the Children offers training on the rights of children in warfare, but not specifically child soldiers.
- The German-led EU force that entered the DRC in 2006 had clarified rules on engaging child soldiers. Was this a special case and should it be a standard requirement for all forces entering a 'child soldier zone'?

5.3.11 Female Child Soldiers: Girls on the Frontline

Preparing troops is essential, and as such certain characteristics of the young soldier must be considered. As such, Kuper draws attention to the fact that while many people view child soldiers as predominately male, their ranks are in fact often filled with girls. As a result the author recommends that rules regarding sexual conduct are reiterated, while the military must be prepared for the specific health needs of girl soldiers. The issue of female child soldiers has to be properly addressed as otherwise there is a fear that women will be overlooked in the demobilisation process.

Girl soldiers should be viewed as an additional concern. In the West women do not serve on frontline combat missions so facing child soldiers that are also female may have additional consequences for the psychology of a professional serviceman.

INTERACT,² a three year study into the subject of children in armed conflict specifically deals with girl combatants as a separate issue from the overall classification of child soldiers. In a concluding workshop

² INTERACT was preceded by ACT (Action Plan Project for Children in Armed Conflict). Interact was a three-year project (ending in July of 2004), funded by the Governments of Norway and Canada and the United Nations University and was affiliated to the Institute for Security Studies (based in South Africa) (ISS) Arms Management Programme.

delivered in June 2004 all research results were presented with child soldiers and girl combatants viewed as two separate entities. The Institute for Security Studies (ISS), which instigated the study evidently felt the need to differentiate the two. It is currently hard to analyse this any further as to date HVR has been unable to gain access to the results of this study.

Key Points

- Serious consideration should be given to dealing with the subject of female child combatants separately from that of child soldiers as a whole.
- Specialised training of personnel may be required to deal effectively with them.
- Consideration should be given to factors which may arise from detaining female child combatants.
- The West does not allow female military personnel to serve in frontline combat zones how will facing girl soldiers affect the psychology of the serviceman's psychology.

5.3.12 NGO Work in the Child Soldier Field

NGOs are at the forefront of the fight to halt the proliferation of child soldiers around the world. NGO policy appears to be based around a desire to achieve the following three tasks: halt active recruitment, demobilise those in-service and then re-integrate those 'liberated' back into peaceful society. NGO focus is on eradicating the problem in the first place. The question raised by this report is somewhat outside the remit of the NGOs and related humanitarian organisations.

However we cannot discount the valuable child soldier information NGOs collect; including movement, characteristics and behaviour. It is also important to note that their work in halting the spread of child soldiers impacts on military experiences of child combatants. The more successful they become the less likely professional military personnel are likely to face them in battle.

Key Points

- NGO work may be an important source of information on child soldiers.
- NGO successes are key to reducing child soldier numbers.

5.3.13 Child Soldiers in the West

The West has not been immune from criticism when it comes to deploying child soldiers. NGOs such as 'Save the Children' and Amnesty International' often claim that both the US and British forces contain soldiers that should be classified as children.

Rosen points to the fact that currently there are 500,000 American high school students enrolled in the Junior Reserve Officers Training Corps, revealing the extent to which the militarization of young children in certain contexts is viewed as normal practice, here the example cites the West as guilty of a practice we often think of as common only to developing countries.

In 2001 the International Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers published 'The Child Soldiers Global Report' which stated that the UK's recruitment practices were on a par with countries like Sri Lanka, East Timor and Iran. It highlighted that there were 5,500 serving members of the three services under 18. At the time the MoD hit back at the report highlighting that every care was taken to try to ensure that no one under 18 became embroiled in armed combat, but that in rare cases it could not be avoided.

It seems paradoxical in some ways that both the UK and US damn the use of children in armed forces such as Iraq and the DRC and are themselves criticised for practising the same policy. Though it is doubtful that recruits are press-ganged into joining in the same way they are in developing countries, it may be a policy that will need to be investigated in detail if the subject of child soldiers is to be tackled with any real success.

Key Points

- 12th June 2001 BBC reports on the finding of 'The Child Soldiers Global Report' with the slogan 'UK 'shamed' over teenage soldiers.'
- The West (the UK and US in particular), is often accused of employing child soldiers (recruited under 18).
- Are efforts to deal with child soldiers hindered due to current western practices?

5.3.14 Post Conflict Support to Troops

HVR has been unable to find any evidence of post-conflict support targeted specifically at troops who have experienced fighting child combatants. Post Combat Stress UK is unaware of any models currently in use or under development in the UK or any other nation. The reasons for this are unclear, although we might speculate that it has not yet been identified as a specific hazard. However, if the proliferation issue continues, NATO and the UN may need to devise a specific model for dealing with psychological problems, which could manifest themselves in combat troops ill prepared to deal with child soldiers.

This possibility is stressed in 'Children at War'. Singer acknowledges the reality that while children are traditionally not considered legitimate targets of violence, when armed a child is as dangerous as an adult, and must be dealt with accordingly. Yet despite this 'kill or be killed' mentality Singer illustrates that professional soldiers at war with children will be vulnerable to psychological trauma. Even when a soldier kills a child in self defence the impact of killing someone who is traditionally viewed as in need of protection can impact upon unit morale.

Key Points

- Post-conflict support focused on the issue of child soldiers does not seem to exist. Why?
- Is it not viewed as a widespread problem?
- Has a need for dedicated models/systems been identified?
- What are the opinions of troops returning from the Gulf?
- There seems no evidence that other countries are devising systems to deal with the psychological issues posed by the child soldier threat.

5.3.15 Child Suicide Bombers

The insurgency forces of both Iraq and Afghanistan are using child soldiers on a regular basis. A fact Singer underlines in many of his articles is that the first American serviceman to be killed by hostile fire in Afghanistan [27] was shot by a 14 year old boy.

Questions must be asked; to what extent were the servicemen actively involved on combat missions trained effectively to deal with child soldiers? Were the militaries of the UK and the US prepared to face an insurgency force that would gain in strength and numbers due to active recruitment of a younger generation?

Iraq and Afghanistan form an important chapter in the problem of child soldiers not only because it is current but also because of the rising trend of child suicide bombers. The willingness of insurgents to use suicide bombers around children is a concern. In mid September 2006 four Canadian soldiers in Afghanistan, were killed by a suicide bomber while handing out sweets to children [28]. Insurgents are now reported to be using children as human shields when they fire at allied troops confident that the coalition troops will at least hesitate before returning fire [29].

The fact that children are no longer an entirely 'safe-factor' in such warfare may have an effect on both the conduct and psychology of allied peacekeepers. Does a policy such as 'hearts and minds' become unworkable when even children may be firing upon or attacking the peacekeepers?

Key Points

- Does the classification of child soldiers include suicide bombers? Can child suicide bombers be classified as child soldiers? If they are dressed in civilian garb and blend into a crowd are they merely 'civilians' until they carry out their mission?
- HVR has found little evidence to suggest that the problem of child suicide bombers in the Vietnam War were ever dealt with satisfactorily.
- Use and recruitment of child soldiers by the insurgency give them an almost unlimited supply of fresh troops.

5.4 SUMMARY OF KEY POINTS

This section collates all the key findings identified throughout the report. Specific author-made recommendations can be seen at Appendix 1.

The Context of Child Soldiers

- Modern warfare directly affects civilians.
- The changing face of modern warfare is linked with the rising use of child soldiers on the battlefield.
- Children form a key factor in war, as civilians or soldiers.
- The widespread availability of light weapons has resulted in it becoming easier for child soldiers to pose a security threat.
- NGO-produced literature focuses on prevention, demobilising and disarming of child soldiers but not on their effect on peacekeeping forces.

The History of Child Soldiers

- Child soldiers should not be regarded as a modern phenomenon. However their use has increased as a result of the nature of modern war which is often being fought using guerrilla tactics.
- Is it possible that troops currently fighting against child combatants in the Gulf are displaying similar attitudes to those who fought the Hitler Youth in the closing stages of World War II?

The Proliferation of Child Soldiers

- Peacekeepers are increasingly exposed to child soldiers.

- It can be argued that the child soldier phenomenon is not limited to the poorer states. Child soldiers also exist in the West in both the militaries of the UK and US.
- Professional Soldiers and peacekeepers need to be prepared to face child soldiers as a security threat and be appropriately equipped to deal with them.

Western Concepts of ‘Childhood’

- To what extent can Western Concepts of childhood be applied in non-Western culture?
- To what extent are Western concepts valid in other cultures?
- The culture in which child soldiers have been indoctrinated must **not** be ignored or marginalised.

The Unique Problem of the Child Soldier

- Child soldiers react very differently from adult soldiers, they must therefore be treated differently.
- Child soldiers may show little or no fear, disregard for life and the basic rules/laws of war.
- Child soldiers are readily available to boost the ranks of insurgent and rebel forces, they are low cost and easy to control.
- Difficult negotiations with rebel groups are further complicated when the unpredictable nature of the child soldier is also factored in.
- Professional soldiers are trained to adhere to and uphold the basic laws of war. Child soldiers in rebel forces are not. This potentially places the professional at increased risk.
- How does the unpredictable nature of child combatants affect the mind of well-disciplined, well-trained peacekeeper?

Recruitment Techniques

- The various methods of recruitment range from being drugged, abducted, ostracised from home due to forced participation in murder, orphaned, indoctrinated, religious pressure or as a willing volunteer.
- According to NGO thinking knowledge of recruitment issues is key to dealing with child soldiers and stopping their continued use.
- Does knowledge of these forced techniques of recruitment affect the effectiveness with the professional military soldier can deal with child soldiers?
- Youth with few social responsibilities and no work may be tempted to take up arms or easier to recruit into rebel forces.

Child Soldiers as Victims

- Sometimes the only way to save their own life is to become a soldier.
- Child soldiers are often viewed by humanitarian organisations and in turn the public, as victims. This is often the case but not always.
- How does one make the distinction between the child soldier as a threat, victim of circumstance, or both? How does this ‘labelling’ affect a soldier’s judgement?
- Have NGOs and humanitarian groups over-simplified the situation by casting children as victims all the time and ignoring cultural factors?

- If the professional serviceman regards child combatants as victims at all times how does this affect his overall psychology?

The Public Image of Child Soldiers

- Press reports often portray child soldiers as unwitting victims.
- Detrimental images and words can demoralise troops in the field and those due to be deployed.
- Images of Western peacekeepers in action against child combatants can have a negative affect on public opinion.
- The question needs to be asked, does there need to be greater control of the press?
- We must recognise that to some extent the press projects the image of our own culture onto regions where cultures and social norms are in fact very different.

Operation BARRAS

- Inaction or hesitation when encountering child soldiers may lead to more bloodshed.
- The prospect of child soldier V child soldier combat. If not now perhaps in the future due to current US and UK recruitment policy.

Child Soldiers: International Law and Training of the Military

- IHL lags behind the changes in modern warfare it is not flexible enough to encompass the threat of child soldiers realistically.
- A distinction should be made between theoretical and practical application of law.
- Uncertainty exists as to whether non-government armed groups are bound by IHL.
- Troops must all be trained in the basic principles of IHL.
- Commanding Officers must be provided with and be fully aware of the particular legal ramifications concerned with the treatment of children.
- Problems exist when deploying professional troops to areas where child soldiers are known to operate. Appropriate pre-deployment training must be offered.
- Identifying child soldiers can be an issue. They do not conform to stereotype.
- The legality of detaining child soldiers is in question and needs to be effectively addressed to avoid complication.
- Law and policy should not be viewed as an obstacle to achieving mission objectives especially where child soldiers are concerned.
- The professional soldier will need reassurance that when engaging child combatants he is performing his duty legally and without fear of reprisal.
- Save the Children offers training on the rights of children in warfare, but not specifically child soldiers.
- The German-led EU force that entered the DRC in 2006 had clarified rules on engaging child soldiers. Was this a special case and should it be a standard requirement for all forces entering a 'child soldier zone'?

Female Child Soldiers: Girls on the Frontline

- Serious consideration should be given to dealing with the subject of female child combatants separately from that of child soldiers as a whole.
- Specialised training of personnel may be required to deal effectively with them.
- Consideration should be given to factors which may arise from detaining female child combatants.
- The West does not allow female military personnel to serve in frontline combat zones how will facing girl soldiers affect the professional serviceman psychologically?

Child Soldiers in the West

- 12th June 2001 BBC reports on the finding of ‘The Child Soldiers Global Report’ with the slogan “UK ‘shamed’ over teenage soldiers”.
- The West (the UK and US in particular), is often accused of employing child soldiers (recruited under 18).
- Are efforts to deal with child soldiers hindered due to current western practices?

Post Conflict Support to Troops

- Post-conflict support focused on the issue of child soldiers does not seem to exist. Why?
- Is it not viewed as a widespread problem?
- Has a need for dedicated models/systems been identified?
- What are the opinions of troops returning from the Gulf?
- There seems to be no evidence that other countries are devising systems to deal with the psychological issues posed by the child soldier threat.

Child Suicide Bombers

- Does the classification of child soldiers include suicide bombers? Can child suicide bombers be classified as child soldiers? If they are dressed in civilian garb and blend into a crowd are they merely ‘civilians’ until they carry out their mission?
- HVR has found little evidence to suggest that the problem of child suicide bombers in the Vietnam War was ever dealt with satisfactorily.
- Use and recruitment of child soldiers by the insurgency gives them an almost unlimited supply of fresh troops.

5.5 POTENTIAL AREAS FOR FURTHER CONSIDERATION

There are a number of questions which will need consideration. These are shown below:

- 1) The specific characteristics of ‘the child’. What is the ‘cut off point’ and does it depend on the definition expressed within the country the conflict is being fought?
- 2) The specific characteristics of ‘the soldier or ‘professional’- will this term cover rebel forces, armed opposition groups, protesters?

- 3) Do we just address conflicts in which western armies are involved or look at civil conflicts between government forces and opposition forces?
- 4) Will we be acknowledging the reality that many professional militaries employ 'child soldiers' under the UN definition of child? As such can we consider the impact upon professional armed forces of fighting on the same side as 'children'-would operation Barras have used so much man power/taken so many risks if it was not for the fact that two of the British troops captured were reported to have been 17 Do the morality issues raised by child soldiers also apply to protecting British underage soldiers?
- 5) Where are child soldiers recruited/abducted from? Some literature suggests that children are often taken from refugee camps- does this affect psychological impact upon western soldiers- as not only is their opponent a child but a vulnerable child who requires humanitarian help?
- 6) This feeds into questions of how western nations view children and the innocence of childhood. Is this view applicable to child soldiers? Is a society's definition of childhood cultural? Is a blanket age for defining the 'child' a suitable measure of childhood? For example the US is holding several combatants in the 16-18 age categories at 'Camp x-ray', detainees under the age of 16 are housed separately in Camp Iguana.
- 7) Is it ever suitable to apply a chronological transition from childhood to adulthood to all societies?
- 8) The question of girl soldiers. Do they provide a double problem for troops as not only do they carry the problems associated with child soldier doctrine but are also female.-The majority of western professional armies do not use women on the front line. Does the presence of female child soldiers have implications for the deployment of female troops by professional militaries? Would this impact upon soldiers? Should it be regarded as a separate question?
- 9) Child suicide bombers- how do professional militaries change their treatment of children in order to protect their personnel? How does it affect soldiers knowing that everyone is potentially the enemy even child civilians?
- 10) Do we have a timeline for conflicts that will be considered? During World War II Germany used child soldiers in the form of the Hitler-Jugend and soldiers on all sides enlisting illegally. These children are often referred to as 'boy soldiers', a term that has different connotations than 'child soldier'. At what point does the issue of child soldiers become a moral question?
- 11) A theory raised by Singer about the lack of ideological basis when child soldiers are used. Would this affect the psychological impact? Do professional militaries enjoy better mental health when fighting in incidents where the aims and demands of the enemy are self evident?
- 12) The issue of Germany refusing to send troops into area where child soldiers are present. What was this decision based upon? What are the implications for other professional militaries?
- 13) Figures quoted suggest that children are present in 75% of conflicts world wide. Should research be looking at the worst affected conflicts?
- 14) Concept of 'shame societies'- the ideological/faith issues raised in individual nations. How this impacts upon a child's will to fight. Western society rarely understands such motivation. Does this knowledge affect the psychological well-being of professional soldiers and their combat performance?
- 15) The rules of war and laws of the innocents- child soldier doctrine is incompatibly with either concept and this affects the manner in which professional soldiers are required to fight-therefore affecting psychological well being.

- 16) How are conflicts portrayed in the media? Many African conflicts are shown as little more than tribal feuding, when in reality they involve large numbers of people, including children, and weapons. Ignorance of the realities of conflicts (primarily as a result of their portrayal), and being unprepared for meeting large number of children will only compound psychological impact.
- 17) The development of urban warfare. Youth Advocate Programme International (YAPI) suggests that changes in the nature of armed conflict is directly linked to the rise of the child soldier phenomenon- the battlefield is now in highly populated areas and as such children are directly affected by the violence; it is inevitable that they will get involved in violence.
- 18) The deliberate decision to send children to fight professional armed forces is made in the knowledge that peacekeeping forces are unwilling to fire on children-the result of this strategy is the destruction of peace treaties and the destruction of psychological conditioning in place to protect children. New rules and doctrine may need to be put into practice if this is to cease.
- 19) The specific characteristic of child soldiers in individual conflict zones needs to be considered- is a child soldier in Iraq the same as one from the DRC? if so how should one adapt strategies for dealing with child soldiers? Are different strategies needed for different zones?
- 20) If soldiers are not allowed to defend themselves adequately from children the psychological damage could be worse. Evidence shows that child soldiers have little or no regard for ROE and therefore often kill POWs.
- 21) If IHL and human rights legislation are not in line with the current use of child soldiers and protects the life of a child-combatant-how should professional soldiers react? It would not be desirable to be in a situation where indecision can begin manifesting itself.
- 22) How are professional soldiers expected to identify child soldiers? Do the media images of a child soldier as an 8 year old offer an accurate depiction?
- 23) Is the body of legislation applied to children and child soldiers e.g. 1989 CRC explained to pre-deployed troops heading for areas where child soldiers are deployed? How are IHL and human rights legislation applied to military training?
- 24) How have NGOs influenced our understanding of the child soldier crisis? Is their analysis of the 'crisis' fuelling psychological damage of professional soldiers by creating a caricature of child soldiers that presents a worst case scenario, portraying the child as unwitting victims?
- 25) Soldiers do not want the possibility of their actions or even inactions undermining a peace process. Without clear guidelines this may be a possibility, if not in reality, then in the mind of the soldier decreasing his effectiveness on the battlefield.
- 26) The capture of child soldiers. How should this be handled? Is it to be encouraged, rather than using lethal force? If so does it put the professional soldier's life at risk to an unacceptable degree?
- 27) To what degree is the possible use of non-lethal weapons practical? How will they affect confidence if troops are to be issued with them alongside regular firearms?
- 28) Classification of Child Soldiers. Should there be some kind of formal classification in place to identify different levels of child soldiers? For example child soldiers in rebel forces who do not adhere to ROE or IHL do so as a result of their environment and training (or lack of it). Child soldiers in professional armies will have a certain level of morality as a result of their treatment and training and will therefore behave differently from rebel force child soldiers. Should this distinction be highlighted?

- 29) The size of the issue needs to be considered. It would be beneficial to gain ‘solid numbers’ on the extent of the problem facing military personnel. The size of the child soldier problem will in turn determine the type of intervention(s) and response to conflicts around the world. How many soldiers have faced child soldiers in the past and how many continue to do so? In theory this could be estimated if we look at the numbers of UK troops based in regions which deploy child soldiers, however this figure would fluctuate based on the state of the region at the time of deployment and in turn the amount of child soldiers being used.

5.6 RECOMMENDATIONS

In order for the armed forces to provide their personnel with the best possible support in dealing with this issue, HVR recommends that the following be considered:

- Political Support. This is support from the highest authority, predicated on revised legal and military doctrine, enabling politicians to vocally support troops engaging child combatants.
- Legal Backing. A thorough review of legal requirements would assure troops that any action against opposing forces using child soldiers would be legal; be that either lethal force or internment.
- A review of military doctrine needs to take place- This would officially recognise the child soldier as both a battlefield entity and security threat. It would also necessitate a formal training program to prepare professional forces.
- Training- for pre-deployment, in-field and post conflict debriefing. This should be reviewed and updated when necessary. It would need to be adaptable enough to be applicable to various nations and cultures deploying child soldiers.
- Post-conflict support- No specific systems seem to be in place to deal with child combatants as an issue. If a problem is identified this needs to be addressed; models and systems may need to be devised. The construction of such systems should be done in conjunction with a survey of professional soldiers’ experiences in the field.
- A detailed investigation into how child soldiers are perceived in the mass media might be deemed important as this could have a strong bearing on public opinion and affect troop morale.

It is thought that each of these areas could provide clear guidance to the soldier on his position should they be deployed in a region where they might come into contact with child combatants. The majority of these suggestions ‘flow-down’ into one another. For example if military doctrine is changed to include child soldiers, training will also need to be adapted, or if full political backing is offered it is possible there will need to be changes in IHL to encompass this. Therefore, a comprehensive approach to these recommendations is required. Following only select suggestions may prove inadequate.

Overall, HVR suggests that if any of the above is put into practice first-hand experience will be required, through professionally administered interviews and surveys. The importance and relevance of the child soldier issue can only truly be ascertained through such practices.

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Appendix 1 – Recommendations Collated from the Literature Review

General recommendations collated from the literature review. These are advocated by the various authors and are listed below. They do not necessarily reflect the views held by the authors of this paper, QinetiQ, HVR, the MoD or the Defence Medical Services. However, these issues may warrant consideration when any of the recommendations outlined in Section 5.6 are addressed:

- Suggested changes to protocol: Ensure soldiers are briefed prior to deployment on local conditions including the existence of child soldiers.
- Soldiers must be aware of the appropriate response to child soldiers, in terms of being able to shoot to kill or shoot to scare.
- Vital that soldiers understand the threat posed by child soldiers, where ever possible keeping the enemy at a distance.
- Tactically it is recommended that soldiers exploit the weakness of their opponent, killing or capturing adults and commanders first in an attempt to destroy the cohesion of the group, removing the central control.
- Psychological methods should be employed, through which child soldiers should be encouraged to surrender without fear of reprisals.
- A suggestion that professional armies adopt the use of non-lethal weaponry as the total annihilation of the enemy can be counterproductive when children are involved in terms of the psychological impact upon professional soldiers.
- Reconsider the treatment of mental health issues in order to ensure their soldiers perform well. A new approach may be needed with regards treating the non-physical wound.
- Provision of post conflict support treatment and in some circumstances individual counselling designed to come to terms with their actions is essential if unit cohesion and combat effectiveness is to be ensured.
- Training needs to be adapted to include the question of child soldiers and their unpredictable nature.
- By examining regions of the world where child soldiers are known to operate and considering socio-economic and political factors shaping society it may be possible to examine the underlying factors encouraging children to become child soldiers.
- The Child Soldier Global Reports (next one due 2008), produced by the Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, are crucial documents for listing the status of where child soldiers operate by region and individual nations. This can help in forward planning before deployment.
- While NGOs view demobilisation as a manner in which to rescue children, their recommendations offer useful information for western governments on how to significantly reduce the ranks of child soldiers, limiting professional soldiers exposure to child soldiers.
- Professional soldiers must be prepared to defend themselves against children.
- Shock tactics tend to be successful against child soldiers; particularly the use of helicopter gunships in Sierra Leone which were found to be very intimidating.
- ‘Firing for shock’ rather than ‘firing for effect’ may limit interaction between professional and child soldiers but the success of such a scheme can not be guaranteed.

- Professional militaries need to reconsider their objectives when children are involved, traditional military success is gauged by destruction of opposition forces using large amounts of firepower, this can be counterproductive when used against child soldiers.
- In order to enact lasting change, Western governments may need to consider how its actions may have exacerbated pressure placed upon regions where child soldiers are known to operate. For example the United States poor record of providing aid to the world's poorest nations.
- The child soldier crisis represents an endemic problem that is intrinsically linked to wide scale health and social problems.
- It is important to remember that while many solutions to the overall problem of child soldiery can be conceived on paper, in practice the effectiveness of such proposals can only be judged case by case.

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Chapter 6 – CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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6.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapters the Task Group studied the phenomenon *Child Soldiers as the Opposing Force* to understand the moral, psychological and operational consequences of professional armed forces personnel facing child soldiers and to develop sets of recommendations for NATO military forces. The participants contributed by mapping the development of child warriors as the opposing force, hereby estimating the size and impact for ongoing and future NATO operations. The Task Group specifically studied the topic from an ethical, anthropological, psychological and sociological perspective. This multi-disciplinary approach provided a firm basis for a comprehensive set of recommendations for military forces that will be addressed in this concluding chapter.

This chapter aims to provide an overview of recommendations that may serve as a basis for the development of military doctrine on the phenomenon of Child Soldiers. These recommendations are drawn from good practices, seminars and specialists in the field of child soldiers. They do not provide a blue print, but provide an integral overview of factors that contribute to the required Comprehensive Approach; isolated application of the recommendations will not be fruitful. It is important to remember that while many solutions to the overall problem of child soldiers can be conceived on paper, in practice the effectiveness of such proposals can only be judged case by case.

The Task Group identified four sets of recommendations, i.e. Legal Backing, Review of Military Doctrine, Training (including ethical training and education) and Support, and Media Perceptions. The legal issues concerning child soldiers that might stem from international or national laws on warfare, International Human Rights, and Rules of Engagement have not been described. These are subject to further study and will only be mentioned as a field of attention in this chapter.

6.2 CONCLUSIONS

Child soldiers have become an emerging battle field entity and of military importance in contemporary warfare. Studies estimate that approximately 300 000 children are serving as combatants and fighting in 75% of world's conflicts. 18% of the world's armed organisations use children that are younger than 12 years old. To put it in perspective, roughly 10% of all current combatants in the world are children. Besides these statistics, western armies have also experienced the military importance of child soldiers as the opposing force: the West Side Boys captured British soldiers in Sierra Leone (September 2000); British forces have detained more than 60 juveniles during operations in Iraq; UN and NATO forces regularly encountered child soldiers during engagements in Iraq, Afghanistan and the Democratic Republic of Congo. They have also become another tool for the weaker opponent in asymmetric warfare, but one that can have great negative impact on the successful conduct of operations.

War and lesser forms of conflict also relate to the professional self images of *real soldiering* and *real combat*. Children are outside or at the periphery of the system soldiers use to classify enemies. The confrontation with child soldiers disrupts our paradigms of professional soldiering and cultural values and beliefs we share on children. Using violent means against children by armies from developed, industrial countries contravenes not only codes of human conduct against enemies, but touches upon some basic understandings about us as human beings. This may lead to moral dilemma's, which demand moral competence and moral professionalism on the part of military personnel. Moral competence and moral

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professionalism are the only way to prevent moral disengagement. Moreover, they play an important role in preventing psychological problems, including depression and post-traumatic stress disorder.

Without downplaying the extent of the child soldier problem, it seems that child soldiers have become icons of world disorder. The public image of child soldiers is one of victims but our troops experience them as a lethal threat. On the one hand children are mere tools of coercive commanders, on the other hand they are also responsible agents enacting rational choices. These diverged images of child soldiers can also have a demoralising effect on our troops. In combination with the world wide attention supported by mass media, proper handling of the child soldier phenomenon in crisis management operations have become an important factor to be taken into account in all lines of operations of a campaign. We are fighting *New Wars* which means that conflicts are managed and fought through the media. Through global surveillance we also see an expansion of international law. *New Wars* have become *Wars of Conscience* in which human rights and humanitarian concerns are ethically and emotionally evocative.

Ultimately there is a great risk of combat ineffectiveness of our military. Therefore we must ensure that our military are fully aware of all aspects of the phenomenon of child soldiers, so that they do not become hesitant and vulnerable in their actions. It implies extra need for resilience of our soldiers and for increased awareness for mental health problems. The prevention of moral disengagement during operations and the demonstration of moral professionalism is what industrial societies expect from their armed services.

In order to be effective in operations, military personnel need to understand and be engaged in all stages of the phenomenon of child soldiers. A fire fight is just one of the stages in encountering child soldiers. The prevention of recruitment or abduction, the reception and treatment of detainees or escapees, demobilisation, disarmament and reintegration in society are evenly important aspects in the handling of child soldiers in which military and other agencies are to play an important role. This is referred to as the Comprehensive Approach.

6.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

Since Africa is becoming a priority region, the chance that western military encounter large number of child combatants has increased significantly. It is considered to be important to raise the issue to alleviate the potentially negative consequences for western military and to become more effective in operations through proper preparation, realistic training, a comprehensive approach during operations, and proper care and treatment after the deployment. This paragraph focuses on the review of military doctrine, and training and support. As mentioned before the legal aspects will not be discussed as they are subject to further study. The media aspects are incorporated in the review. The aim is to provide an overview of recommendations that may serve as a basis for the development of military doctrine on the phenomenon of child soldiers. These recommendations are drawn from good practices, seminars and specialists.

6.3.1 Review of Military Doctrine

- **Intelligence**

As part of raising the military's cultural awareness of the area of operations, it is vital that soldiers understand everything possible about the child soldiers. By examining regions of the world where child soldiers are known to operate (see Child Soldier Global Reports of the Coalition to stop the Use of Child Soldiers), it may be possible to examine the underlying factors encouraging children to become child soldiers. Military are to be briefed on the local attitude towards children and the different roles child soldiers play in the conflict. Regular ISTAR-assets are valuable to support the mission, with emphasis on Signal Intelligence and Human Intelligence, but use of local informants, guides and interpreters may be of greater use.

- **Manoeuvre**

- **General**

Soldiers must be aware of the appropriate response to child soldiers in terms of being able to shoot to kill or shoot to scare. Killing is an option, but having analysed the possible negative impact on the operation and troops it is not a preferred one. There is a need to develop alternatives to the employment of lethal force against juvenile combatants. Tactically it is recommended that soldiers exploit the weakness of their opponent, killing or capturing adults and commanders first in an attempt to destroy the cohesion of the group. Children rely on central control. Centre of gravity is the hold adult leaders have over the children. Shock tactics tend to be successful against child soldiers: particularly the use of helicopter gun-ships in Sierra Leone was found to be very intimidating. Where ever possible keep the enemy at a distance. In conjunction with other agencies, the military may play a role in disrupting recruitment by protecting schools, refugee camps, churches and demobilisation sites.

- **Supporting Operations**

- **Information Operations**

- **Media Operations**

Military as well as ministerial spokespersons are to be aware of the public perception and media reporting and the impact on the support of the mission. Confrontations with child soldiers, including killing them or even being killed by them, are ground for public relations disasters. In a strategic communications plan, the public and politicians are to be sensitised ahead of time to the potential deaths of child soldiers. The message should be that everything possible is done to avoid and limit child soldiers from becoming casualties, but that lethal force may be the only option; that juvenile detainees and escapees are being treated in accordance with international law and great care; that the guilt and blame lies with the people who recruit children as soldiers.

- **Psychological Operations**

Psychological methods should be employed, through which child soldiers should be encouraged to surrender without fear of reprisals. Front line troops and communities should be informed constantly on the ramification of violating human rights and the recruitment of child soldiers, and possible signed agreements.

- **Detention Operations**

Detention and interrogation of juvenile prisoners has to take place in accordance with International Humanitarian Law. ROEs, Standing Operating Procedures (SOPs) or protocols have to be carefully considered, determined and practised prior to the deployment of military. All children have special care requirements, but child soldiers may need additional specialised care. They may have mental health problems or drug-addictions. They may also be infected by HIV/AIDS or other diseases. This requires special attention of specialists, like psychiatrists, paediatrics and specialised nurses.

- **Civil Military Cooperation (CIMIC)**

The group stressed the importance of cooperation between military forces and NGOs, in order to learn from their experience and to develop a comprehensive approach towards handling child soldiers. The prevention of recruitment or abduction, the reception and treatment of detainees or escapees, demobilisation, disarmament and reintegration in society are important aspects in the handling of child soldiers in which military and other agencies are to play a role. Such approach contributes to the overall effectiveness of the mission.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Disarmament, Demobilization and Rehabilitation (DDR)**

Disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration require an inter-agency approach. Besides the technical execution of this process, military should also focus on the security aspects of it (Singer Levine). Demobilisation centres need to be protected from being overrun by rebels. Additional child protection measures should be taken and if possible, children should be physically separated from demobilised adult soldiers and put in custody of specialised NGOs.

- **Security Sector Reform (SSR)**

Security Sector Reform is vital for the restoration of the rule of law by the government and local security institutions. The re-establishment of security also mitigates the likelihood of children being recruited as soldiers.

- **Fires**

Professional military need to reconsider their objectives when children are involved, traditional military success is gauged by destruction of opposition forces using large amounts of firepower. This can be counterproductive when used against child soldiers in the *New Wars*. The use of non-lethal and less-lethal weapons should be encouraged. This helps solidify political and public support for ongoing operations and long-term efforts. 'Firing for shock' rather than 'firing for effect' may limit interaction between professional and child soldiers, but the success of such a scheme can not be guaranteed.

- **Force Protection**

Professional soldiers may not be hesitant in their actions and must be prepared to defend themselves against children; shoot to kill or shoot to scare. Thorough knowledge of the role and use of child soldiers helps professional soldiers assessing the threat that children may pose.

- **Medical**

Military must be made aware of the possible moral and psychological impact of engaging child soldiers. The medical staff should pay special attention for non-physical wounds by arranging in-field and post-deployment treatment.

- **Legal**

As mentioned before, military should be fully aware of International Humanitarian Law (IHR), but policy makers should produce clear and appropriate ROEs for engaging, detaining and interrogating child soldiers.

During the seminar "Child Soldiers: Implications for U.S. Forces" held by the Center for Emerging Threats and Opportunities of the Marine Corps Warfighting Laboratory, in November 2002, Peter Singer presented *Suggested Guidelines When Engaging Child Soldiers*. These guidelines provide a good basis for the development of military doctrine, the conduct of training and operations and post-deployment care.

| Suggested Guidelines When Engaging Child Soldiers |
|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intelligence: Be attuned to the specific make-up of the opposing force. • Force Protection: All children are not threats, but require the same scrutiny as adults. • Engagement: Operate with awareness of the situation's dynamics. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Fire for shock effect when possible ○ Shape the opposition by creating avenues for escape ○ Leaders control is the centre of gravity, so targets first as possible. • After-math: Units may require special post-conflict treatment. • Break the cycle: Deployed units should support rehabilitation efforts. |

6.3.2 Training and Support

In general, the Security and Defence community as a whole should be familiarised with the phenomenon of child soldiers through seminars, academies, scenario-training, war games, and training of foreign military. Training and education on individual, organisational, national and international level generate a common awareness and understanding of the problem. Military should develop special tactics, techniques and procedures (TTPs) which are based on new military doctrine. These TTPs can then be incorporated in training programmes for deploying forces. In order to enhance combat and mission effectiveness in *New Wars*, ethical dilemma training is to become SOP for operational units and be integrated in NCO and officer's career education.

Close and regular inter-agency communication, including NGOs, is required to raise mutual understanding of competences, identify common goals and fields of cooperation, and avoid duplication of effort. In that respect the efforts of the different Centres for Peacekeeping Operations are to be combined. Such cooperation has been demonstrated in July 2007 where a group of specialists assembled at the Kofi Annan International Peace Operations Centre in Accra, Ghana, in exercise PRODIGAL CHILD¹.

A new approach may be needed with regards treating the non-physical wounds. Provision of post conflict support treatment, and in some circumstances individual counselling designed to come to the terms with their actions, is essential if unit cohesion and combat effectiveness is to be ensured.

The decision to broaden the scope of the HFM-159/RTG to The Confrontation with Tragic Moral Dilemma's and Mental Health Problems will result in more suggestions with regard to (ethics) education and training.

¹ The group consisted of humanitarian assistance workers, child protection specialists, police and professional soldiers, lawyers, United Nations (UN) political affairs officers and NGO mediators. The exercise was organised by Canadian Senator, the honourable Lieutenant General Romeo Dallaire Rtd.

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| 14. Abstract | | | |
| <p>Asymmetrical warfare includes armed conflicts in which the conventional armed forces of one party, which uses regular means, is opposed by an unconventional enemy using irregular means. A very sad example of the unconventional enemy is the child warrior. Frontline observations and case studies of mental health problems stemming from confrontations with child warriors indicate a tragic moral dilemma. Dealing with these dilemmas in a morally responsible way is part of the moral professionalism and moral competence military personnel should be trained for. From observations of soldiers of the industrial democracies who face these young combatants it is concluded that children are not seen as hated enemies and soldiers usually exhibit a great amount of empathy toward children in war-torn societies. Consequently, engagements with child soldiers can be incredibly demoralizing for professional troops and can also affect unit cohesion. A literature search has uncovered very little data relating specifically to the psychological impact of child soldiers on armed forces personnel. The findings of this report encompass legal guidelines, cultural awareness as well as military doctrine and tactics. Public perception and media reporting also seem to impact upon how a soldier deals with any child soldier engagement.</p> | | | |





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